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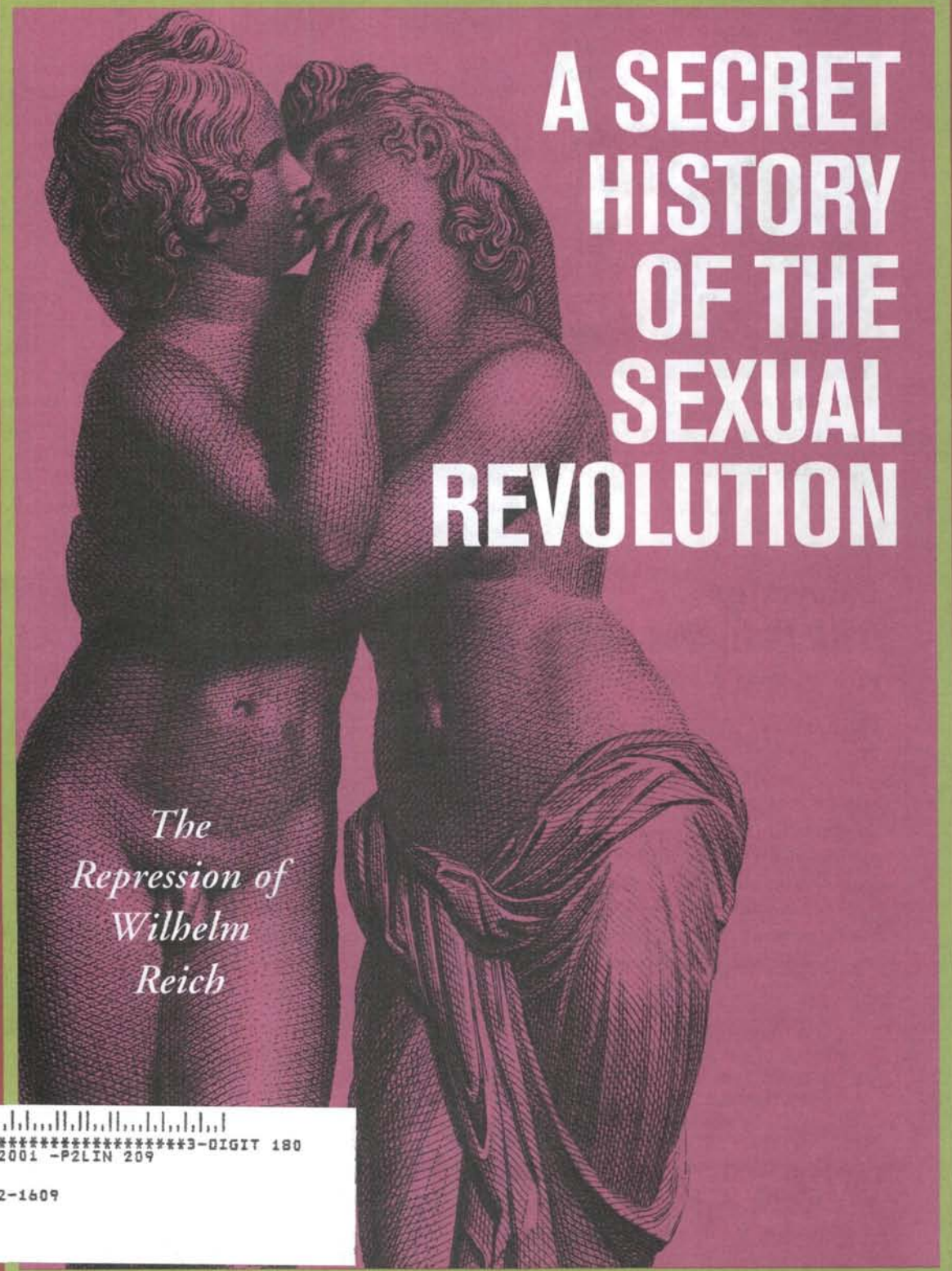

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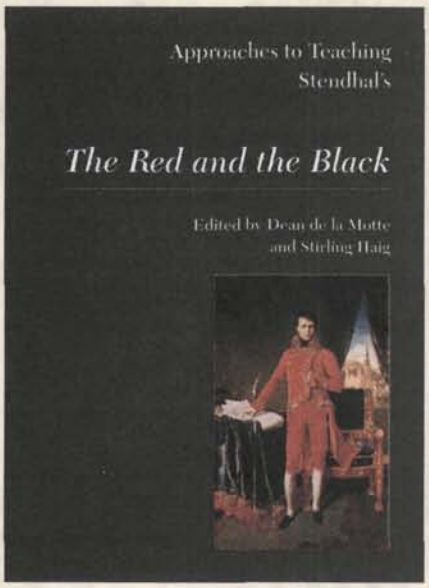

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Dean de la Motte and Stirling Haig, eds.

"A NOVEL is a mirror moving along a highway," writes Stendhal in *The Red and the Black*, his chronicle of French Restoration politics, class, and society on the eve of the July Revolution of 1830. "One minute you see it reflect the azure skies, next minute the mud and puddles of the road." Stendhal's defense of his work and the widely taught novel in which it appears set forth two problematic topics for students: literary realism (and its limitations) and the presentation of history in literature. The editors of this volume focus on how best to address these questions in courses on French literature, world literature, European intellectual history, comparative literature, and more.

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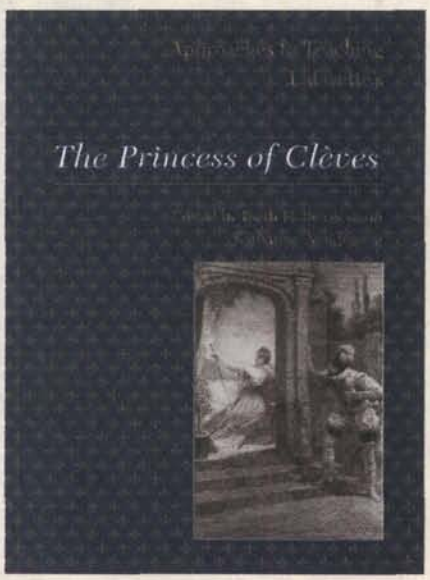

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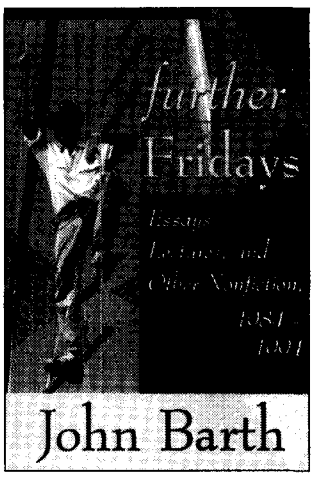

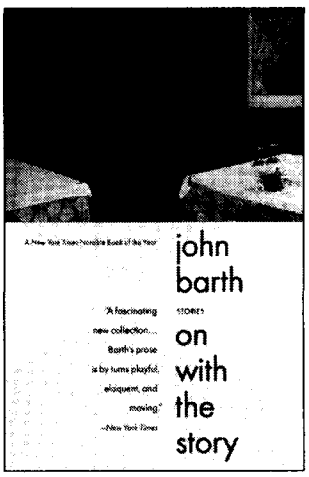

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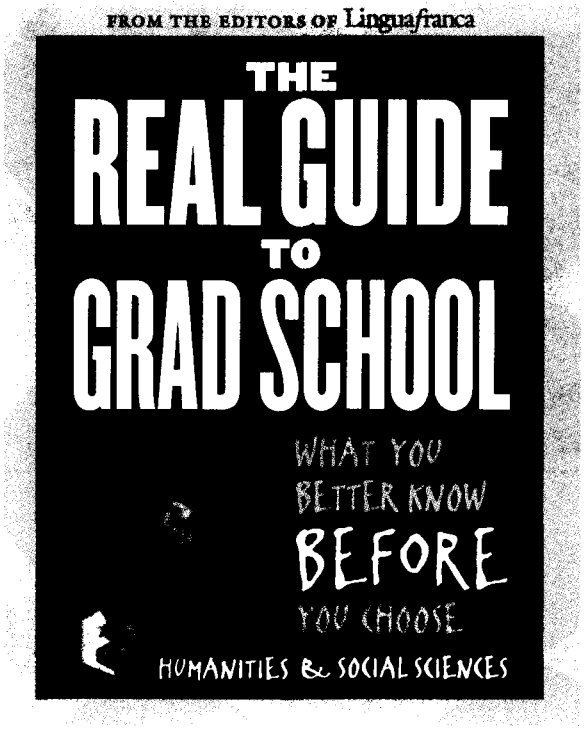

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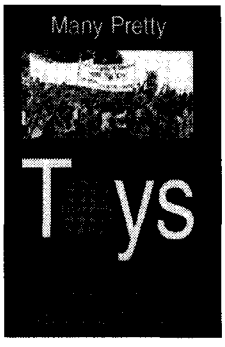

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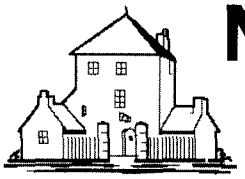

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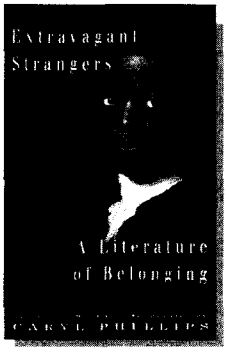

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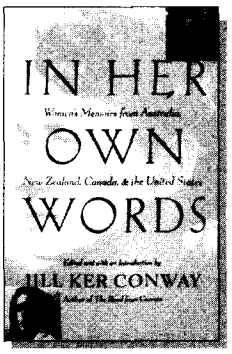

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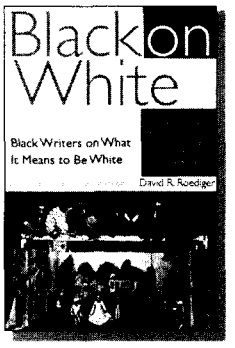

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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THE TEMPEST

In William W. Kerrigan's "The Case for Bardolatry" [November], praise of Shakespeare depends, as it often does, on dispraise of everybody else. Is hatred for the living a necessary corollary of love for the dead? And is sloppy scholarship a necessary corollary of bardolatry? Neither Kerrigan nor the subject of his essay, Harold Bloom, has any expertise in the field of bibliographical or textual studies, despite their lofty pronouncements on the merits of various editions. And as much as I would like to deserve the distinction accorded by Kerrigan's claim that "there is no more pathetic book in modern criticism" than my own *Reinventing Shakespeare*, your readers should probably be warned that Kerrigan seems not to have read the product he elevates to this unique status.

Far from denying Shakespeare's genius, I begin the book by admiring his ability to reinvent himself and end it with the modest proposal that he belongs in the company of Sophocles, Euripides, Plautus, Lope de Vega, Racine, Dante, Tolstoy, and Jane Austen. I guess my mistake lay in supposing that greatness might be plural, and "the invention of the human" a collaborative project. But maybe what Kerrigan describes as having "never been struck by genius" is really just having been struck by genius more than once.

GARY TAYLOR
DIRECTOR, HUDSON STRODE PROGRAM IN RENAISSANCE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

William W. Kerrigan replies: The record speaks for itself on whether Bloom and I have responded to geniuses other than Shakespeare. But Gary Taylor downplays his allegiance to social constructionism. "The history of Shakespearotics," he tells us in a summary sentence from *Reinventing Shakespeare,* "repeatedly demonstrates that his reputation is a function of larger social and cultural movements"—has, that is, nothing to do with intrinsic merit or genius, which are themselves only metaphysical fantasies we fall back on to hide from ourselves the puppetry of "larger...movements" (the biggest ones for Taylor being imperialism and elitism). His final paragraph equates praising Shakespeare with political sycophancy.

No doubt the language in which Shakespeare has been admired can be shown to reflect the big deals of history. How could it not, since the only way we can know anything at all about the intellectual side of "larger social and cultural movements" is through such particulars as the history of Shakespeare's reputation? For Taylor, however, there is no counterweight of individual excellence in Shakespeare or anybody else to offset the larger forces: "We find in Shakespeare only what we bring to him or what others have left behind [pretty much the same thing in Taylor's view]; he gives us back our own values." Historical forces wrote Shakespeare's plays and still write our books about those plays. It would take another exchange to learn what the historical forces would tell Taylor to say if asked which of them wrote the pathetic book with his name on the cover.

BEYOND BELIEF

Charlotte Allen ["Brainwashed!" December/January] unfairly dismisses dozens of researchers who have concluded that the term "brainwashing" is a political concept with little application to new religious groups.

Personally, I have spent thousands of dollars doing research on new religions, occasionally with small grants from my university, and I have written five books and more than one hundred articles on the subject. One time, and only one time, more than twenty years ago, I drove from Reno to Berkeley to attend a conference that had been organized by the Unification Church, and I allowed the church to pay for two nights at a hotel. On the basis of those two nights, Allen included me on her list of scholars whose work is tainted because we allowed nontraditional

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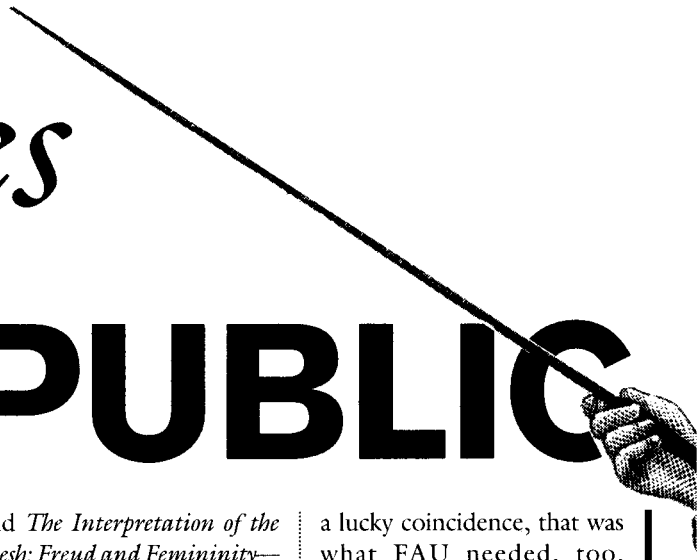

WHAT MAKES A PUBLIC INTELlectual? The answer is hazy. Clearly Henry Louis Gates Jr. is one: He goes on TV and writes for *The New Yorker*. But Noam Chomsky is one, too, and he does neither. Must the intellectual deal with public issues, as William Julius Wilson does, or may he or she simply take academic subjects to the public, à la Stephen Hawking? Are the fame of Camille Paglia and the influence of Milton Friedman really the same thing?

The problem with the term—and any term that embraces both Umberto Eco and Arianna Huffington can safely be said to have a problem—is that it has so many contradictory connotations. "Public" can refer to the nation or the neighborhood, the illiterate hordes or the readership of *The New York Review of Books*. One public intellectual may wish to bestow the ideas of the scholars on the masses, another to force the ideas of the masses on the scholars.

And now, to add to the confusion, Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton is turning the public intellectual into an academic degree. Beginning this fall, bright, adventurous men and women with the conviction that the social order would profit from their input may pursue a Ph.D. in FAU's Public Intellectuals Program—and for only $8,700 a year ($2,500 for Florida residents).

A Ph.D. in being a public intellectual? It sounds strange. After all, the doctorate traditionally signals one's expertise in a specific field of research. But FAU is up to something different: Its degree is defined in terms of the recipient's ambitions, not his or her knowledge. Still, the standard features of a graduate program are in place. In the awkward prose of university administration, the course catalog describes an interdisciplinary curriculum "beyond the margins of purely discipline-based research"; it includes areas of concentration such as "Race and Ethnic Conflict," "Media and Popular Culture," "Public Policy and the Concept of the Public," and "Creative Strategies" (which the catalog defines as tactics for "catching the imagination of people, if not the conscience of cultures"). The degree requirements include two written qualifying exams and a dissertation, the latter supervised by a multidisciplinary committee drawn from FAU's forty-five-member arts and letters faculty (who, truth be told, are hardly household names). Don't expect to leave Boca Raton in less than four years.

The person in charge of educating public intellectuals is Teresa Brennan, a Cambridge-educated social theorist, whose abstruse-sounding books include *History After Lacan* and *The Interpretation of the Flesh: Freud and Femininity*—works, she insists, that actually reflect "a real unfashionable commitment to clarity." Brennan, a spectacularly well-networked (though not publicly famous) scholar, who trained in psychoanalysis and worked in politics before she turned to scholarship, didn't begin her own graduate studies till she was in her mid-thirties. As she worked on her degree, Brennan says, she met people who were drifting reluctantly into professional academia—one of her fellow students had wanted to work for the United Nations but "ended up as an assistant professor somewhere."

What such people needed, she thought, was a different kind of graduate program. By a lucky coincidence, that was what FAU needed, too, according to Dorothy Stetson, the school's humanities chair. In 1991, now-deceased local businessman Charles Schmidt had donated $10 million to support a humanities grad school at Florida Atlantic, in honor of his late wife, Dorothy. But as a state institution, Stetson says, FAU had to find something that wouldn't compete with existing doctoral programs at other state schools. Enter Brennan, who left a visiting post at Cornell to become the first Schmidt Distinguished Professor of Humanities.

> A Ph.D. in being a public intellectual? Florida Atlantic University's new program may become the breeding ground for future Umberto Ecos and Arianna Huffingtons.

Already, Brennan has drawn a raft of name-brand thinkers as visiting faculty or guest lecturers, including Cornell intellectual historian Susan Buck-Morss, Harvard philosopher K. Anthony Appiah, Harvard theologian Cornel West, and historian and well-known critic of the academy Russell Jacoby ("It's a natural for me," says Jacoby, author of *The Last Intellectuals*). The curriculum advisory board includes Harvard feminist Alice Jardine and the peripatetic Stanley Fish, who will also pop in and teach. Nonacademic board members include the writer and AIDS activist Jeffrey Escoffier, the labor lawyer Thomas Geoghegan, and the anti-biotech crusader Jeremy Rifkin.

Having a Ph.D. in chemistry may make you a chemist, but

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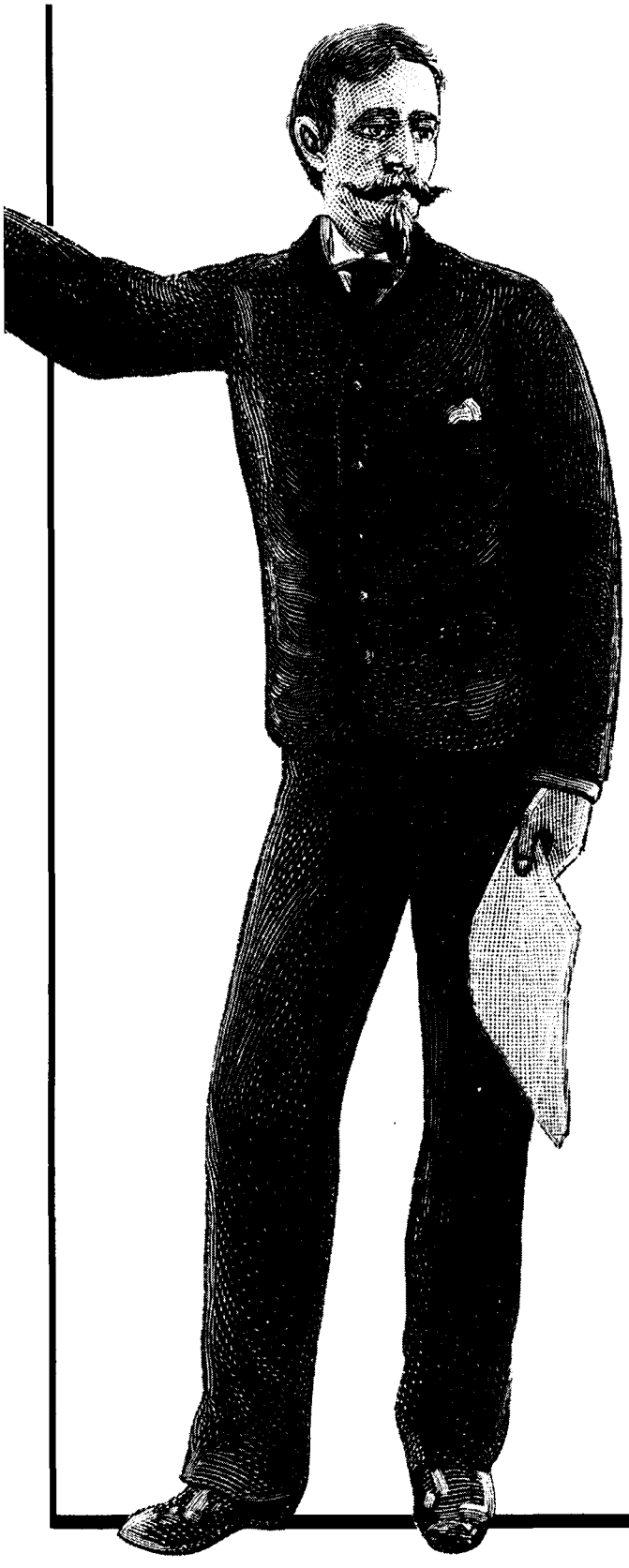

does having a Ph.D. in public intellectualism make you a public intellectual? Maybe not. But the goal of the program is not to accredit a new generation of George Will–style pundits; rather, Brennan says, it aims to train intellectually oriented people to go out into public life. The idea, she says, is in part to give students support from people who are already out in the world, through instruction, mentoring, and hands-on practicum courses (a seminar in how to start an environmental recycling business, for example). She envisions graduates becoming journalists, documentary filmmakers, museum directors, clergy, community organizers, and labor organizers, among other things. Fish goes so far as to imagine "a public intellectual working in a brokerage firm."

Though the first batch of students—expected to number about twenty—has yet to be chosen, Brennan hopes it will include both people "who have been involved in some public-intellectual profession" and "people fresh from their first degrees, who...want to have an impact outside the academy."

"It's important to stress here that this is not an anti-intellectual program," Brennan says. Despite its extra-academic aims, the program intends to be heavy on scholarship and theory. "The emphasis, as I read the literature, is on extraordinarily advanced work," boasts Fish. "Teresa has invited people whose work is regarded as the most advanced and difficult."

Which is not to say that the curriculum doesn't threaten to veer into squidginess here and there. Anti-genital-mutilation activist Nawal El Saadawi, for instance, will offer a course this fall called Creativity and Dissidence, which the catalog promises "will be built on continuous open and free discussion, on our experiences of life, and on how different forces stifle our creative powers."

But beyond elevated notions of service and progress, there

Beyond elevated notions of service and progress, there is another good reason for sending Ph.D.'s out into public life: It may help get rid of them.

is another good reason for sending Ph.D.'s out into public life: It may help get rid of them. With academic employment prospects in the humanities resembling dinner prospects during the great potato famine, even some skeptics are willing to give Florida Atlantic's plans the benefit of the doubt. At best, FAU might draw doctoral candidates away from glutted disciplinary programs elsewhere; even if it doesn't, it could provide other schools with a blueprint for workfare for budding scholars. Pointing Ph.D.'s toward the larger world may or may not help the world, but at least it will give them somewhere to go.

TOM SCOCCA

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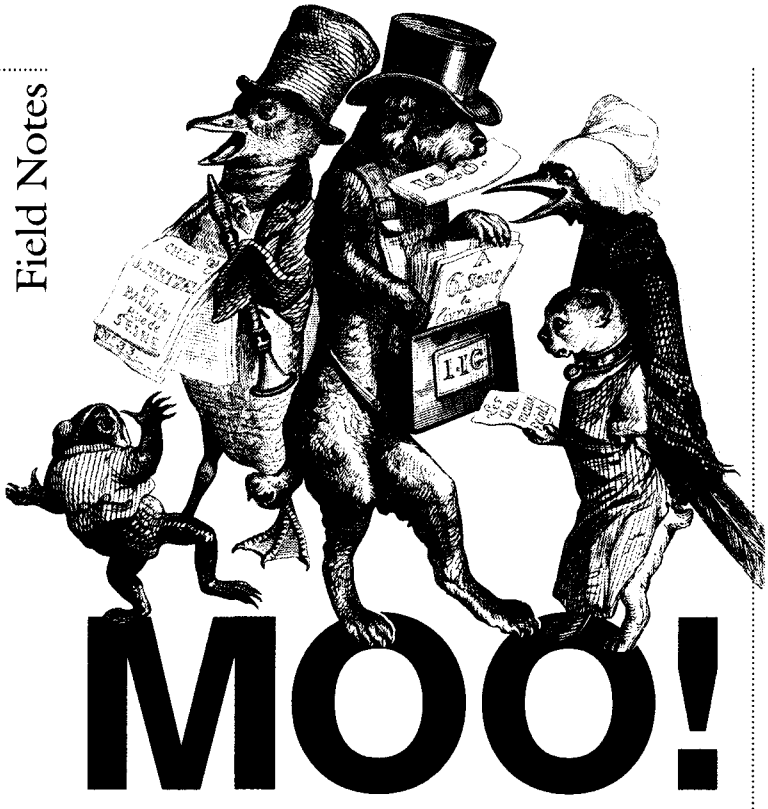

MOO!

NOT LONG AGO, THE DISTINguished Australian novelist Elizabeth Costello delivered a pair of rambling academic lectures on a "crime of stupefying proportions" going on unobserved all around her audience: the abuse and slaughter of animals. The range of reactions was predictable. A philosopher in the audience was heard muttering about "French irrationalism." A distinguished poet on the faculty sent a letter explaining his absence, saying that he objected to her comparison of beef cattle with Jewish victims at Auschwitz. Others in the audience took issue with Costello's use of anthropomorphism, her lack of historical perspective, and the way she spoke not as a scholar but as "a person whose sole claim to your attention is to have written stories about made-up people."

But Elizabeth Costello herself is a made-up person, the protagonist of South African novelist J.M. Coetzee's own 1997–1998 Tanner Lectures, to be published by Princeton University Press in April as *The Lives of Animals*. For Coetzee, fiction may have been a slyly ambiguous way of raising a subject whose most passionate defenders are too often dismissed, in the words of philosopher and *Animal Liberation* author Peter Singer, as "sentimental, emotional animal-lovers." After all, Costello herself asks in one of her fictional lectures, might literature succeed in advancing the cause of animal rights where philosophy has failed?

Last December, in a real-life twist on Coetzee's fable, a group of four literary scholars raised a similar question at the MLA conference in San Francisco. The venue was a panel on animal autobiography, sponsored by the newly formed Society for Animal Advocacy Through Literature (SAAL). The society, founded by three professors from the University of Wisconsin with a strong background in animal rights activism, aims to shake up the musty field of animal literary studies with an emphasis on texts that treat animals not as allegories of the human condition but as autonomous beings with their own experiences. As panelist Marion Scholtmeijer, a professor at the University of North British Columbia and the author of *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction* (Toronto, 1993), puts it, "We proceed from the idea that animals have not only been mistreated, they have also been misrepresented. Too many people are still stuck with animals as symbols of things other than what they are to themselves. That has become passé in modern times. Anyone who's still writing that way is writing bad literature."

The MLA panel is the latest manifestation of a small but growing wave of animal-centered literary study. Recent publications in the field include Randy Malamud's *Reading Zoos: Representations of Animals and Captivity* (NYU, 1998) Katherine M. Roger's *The Cat and the Human Imagination: Feline Images From Beast to Garfield*, (Michigan, 1997) and the anthology *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History* (Routledge, 1997), which contains essays on subjects ranging from Kafka's metamorphosed humans to Gary Larson's talking bugs.

Who will be the Harriet Beecher Stowe of the battery hen?

But can *Far Side* cartoons really provide insight into the lives of animals? As the MLA panelists acknowledge, animals—the controversial sign-language pronouncements of Koko the gorilla aside—have so far been unable to write their own stories. But like Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello, the MLA panelists believe that imaginative writing can bridge the species gap in a way that science cannot. "Literature is freer than other disciplines to measure the Other's point of view," says Scholtmeijer. "It can also expand the number of people who have empathy—more people read fiction than animal-rights literature." As panel organizer Julie Ann Smith, of the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater, puts it, "Animals have something to tell humans about how to live in the world as physical beings in a more satisfying way."

In their papers, the MLA panelists focused on the same higher-order animals—apes, horses—that dominate Elizabeth Costello's lectures. Other species, it would seem, have a more serious PR problem. Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* was called "the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the horse." But who will be the Harriet Beecher Stowe of the battery hen? (And will Francis Ford Coppola be interested in making the movie?)

In fact, some feminist critics have taken tentative steps in this direction, seeing patriarchy at work in the elevation of noble wildlife over the dumb, domestic, "unnatural" breeders-in-overdrive of the barnyard. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Continuum, 1990), Carol Adams used critical theory and literary analysis to draw parallels between cruelty to animals and violence against women. In "Thinking Like a Chicken: Farm Animals and the Feminine Connection," an essay in *Women and Animals* (Duke, 1995), Karen Davis, a poultry activist with a Ph.D., recounts how her

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essay "Clucking Like a Chicken," in which she turned herself into a human microphone held up to the beak of a hen, was rejected by the journal *Environmental Ethics* because it had "too much first person singular." The essay-within-an-essay reads like a brilliant parody of "deep ecology" godfather Aldo Leopold's exhortation to "think like a mountain"—except that Davis is dead serious about the need to hear "the music of the spheres in the cluck of a chicken" and the other noises drowned out by "the regal harmonies of the mountain and their ersatz echoes in the groves of academe."

The "animal autobiography" championed by the MLA panelists may pose a challenge to dominant approaches to ecology that emphasize nature as a whole and leave individual animals—except for us hairless bipeds—out of the picture. And while the SAAL has no official position on vegetarianism, its founding members—all vegans—don't rule out the possibility that literature can bring the horrors of the abattoir to an end. "Do you really believe, Mother, that poetry classes are going to close down the slaughterhouses?" Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello is asked by her skeptical son. At the MLA panel, the real-life Marian Scholtmeijer concluded her paper with the answer that "the best animal autobiographies will convert us all to vegetarianism."

JENNIFER SCHUESSLER

NORTHWIND PICTURE ARCHIVES

DARK AGES?

THE FAMOUS HARVARD HISTORIAN Charles Homer Haskins (1870–1937) had a hand in building three significant entities in his lifetime: Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Medieval Academy of America. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are no more, of course. And the stodgy Medieval Academy—which Haskins established in 1926 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and which is the largest and most prestigious professional society for medievalists in the United States—is showing a few cracks at the seams.

The commotion started early last year, when Jane Chance, a medievalist at Rice University, did a quick gender analysis of the January 1998 issue of *Speculum*, the academy's expensively produced and extremely formal scholarly journal. She found that although about 43 percent of the books reviewed in that issue were by women, about three-fourths of the books' eighty-six reviewers were men. Equally troubling to Chance was the fact that Boston-area schools seemed overrepresented in *Speculum*'s stable of book review editors and reviewers. "They have nine book review editors," she says. "All but two are at Harvard or in the Boston area, and maybe two are women." She adds, on an especially cynical note, "If a reviewer doesn't know you, you are not going to get a good review in many cases."

A negative review in a premier publication like *Speculum* can seriously undermine a young scholar's prospects for tenure, and no sooner had Chance aired her concerns about the journal on Medfem-List, a discussion list operated by the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship, than she was swamped with stories about female scholars whose books had been trashed in *Speculum* to the detriment of their careers.

One such tale was that of Gayle Margherita, who had received her doctorate in English from Cornell and was coming up for tenure at Indiana University when *Speculum* published a nasty review of her book, *The Romance of Origins: Language and Sexual Difference in Middle English Literature* (Pennsylvania, 1994). Indiana denied her tenure, and Margherita found herself teaching at New Mexico State University.

David Aers, the New Historicist at Duke who wrote the devastating book review for *Speculum*, deemed Margherita's work, a Lacanian reading of medieval romances, "inaccurate" in places, and "inattentive" in others, and dismissed the whole as an "uncritical rehearsal and application" of theory. To the more than fifty women scholars who signed a petition spearheaded by Chance and submitted to the Medieval Academy's governing council in February 1998, Aers's assessment was part of a pattern smacking of sexism.

Is the Medieval Academy guilty of "an alarming ageism and gender bias," as one feminist scholar claims?

Among other pleas, the petition asked the council to study "whether adequate attention is paid to...gender/regional diversity" in the selection of book reviewers at *Speculum*.

The academy's president at the time was a woman, the prominent Columbia historian Caroline Walker Bynum, whose 1982 book, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (California), is regarded as an ur-text of feminist scholarship. Without endorsing Chance's

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petition herself, Bynum agreed to bring it before the academy's council, which dismissed the charge of sex bias but did concede that the journal's roster of reviewers reflected a less than ideal geographic diversity. To redress this imbalance, the board voted to open up two review-editing slots on the journal to non–East Coasters.

Then the academy ran some numbers of its own. And what it found was, in fact, quite encouraging to female scholars. It turned out that what was once a bastion of male domination had become 45 percent female by 1998. Among its graduate student members—representative of the next generation of medieval scholars—women actually predominated, at 57 percent, reflecting a nationwide trend in enrollments in medieval studies and in the humanities in general.

In its September 1998 newsletter, the academy issued a detailed gender breakdown of *Speculum* book reviews. Overall, some 28 percent of the books reviewed by *Speculum* during 1998 were by women, and 31 percent of the reviewers were women. The academy's incoming president, Theodore M. Andersson, a professor emeritus of German at Stanford, wrote a letter to Chance explaining that the lingering gender imbalance among *Speculum* reviewers might be due to the fact that "scholars hit their stride ten to fifteen years after the Ph.D. and are likely to start showing up in the pages of *Speculum* in their late thirties."

Chance, however, was undeterred. Sex discrimination is still widespread at the Medieval Academy, she says, pointing out that when the group inducted five new "fellows" (an honorary designation for medievalists with stellar careers) last spring, not one of them was a woman. Partly in response to that "slap in the face," Chance says, she organized a session titled "The Reception of Medieval Feminist Scholarship" at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association (MLA) last December during which she accused *Speculum* of continuing to maintain "old boy male reviewing systems." Chance also accused Andersson of "an alarming ageism and gender bias" in attributing to career lag time the fourteen-point disparity between the percentage of female reviewers in *Speculum* and the percentage of female medievalists in the academy. Furthermore, Chance told a packed conference room at the MLA convention, when women's books are reviewed in *Speculum*, even favorably, the reviewers tend to use "gender markers" such as "stimulating," "attractive," and "engaging," while men's books receive tougher, masculine-style descriptions such as "useful," "challenging," and "exemplary scholarship."

> "*Speculum* is an abominable journal with a narrow group of people in the Ivy League reviewing each other's books," says Norman F. Cantor.

Chance, who has been a full professor at Rice since 1980 and has thirteen books to her name, seems in some ways an unlikely crusader for gender equity in *Speculum*. But her suspicions may have a personal origin. Chance's *Medieval Mythography: From Roman North Africa to the School of Chartres, A.D. 433–1177* (Florida, 1994), which won the MLA's south central regional division's best book prize, received a harsh review in *Speculum* from Winthrop Wetherbee, an English professor at Cornell. Wetherbee, whose field of expertise is roughly coterminous with Chance's, had also reviewed her first book, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Columbia, 1975), in a manner she found unenthusiastic and, she adds, had "singled out for lambasting" the introduction she wrote to a 1991 collection of essays dealing with medieval mythography. Was it possible, Chance wondered, that Wetherbee might have something to do with the fact that the journal has never accepted any of the articles she has submitted to it?

Wetherbee, who has no official relationship with *Speculum*, dismisses the idea. *Medieval Mythography* earned a negative review because, he insists, it is simply a bad book: "It's full of sloppy scholarship. She doesn't pay any attention to scholarship that's not in English, she gets the facts wrong in places, and some of the sentences don't even make sense. The book costs $85, and if you're a librarian at a small college thinking about paying that kind of money, you deserve to know it's a real stinker. She's not some young woman right out of graduate school who's mesmerized by theory; she's a senior scholar who ought to know better."

The Chance-*Speculum* quarrel may be a tempest in a tankard. Still, at least one leading nonfeminist scholar would like to see the Medieval Academy take further steps away from its insular origins. "It's a thorough disgrace, and *Speculum* is an abominable journal with a narrow group of people in the Ivy League reviewing each other's books, so anyone in the Ivy League gets gentle treatment, and others get less gentle treatment," says New York University medievalist Norman F. Cantor, whose acerbic *Inventing the Middle Ages* (William Morrow, 1991) assailed the professional and personal lives of a roster of his fellow medievalists as savagely as any *Speculum* review.

Of course, it's worth pointing out that *Inventing the Middle Ages* also received its comeuppance in *Speculum*—and from a non–Ivy League medievalist no less: The University of North Carolina's Richard W. Pfaff called the book "shallow," "palpably eccentric," a "combination of dogmatism with sloppiness and above all arrogance," and a "mean-spirited and tendentious work."

CHARLOTTE ALLEN

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POLES APART

WHEN THE POLISH POET Zbigniew Herbert died last July at the age of seventy-three, his passing inspired a number of stirring tributes. Though he never won a Nobel Prize like his compatriots Czeslaw Milosz and Wislawa Szymborska, his astringent verse and long-standing opposition to the Communist regime had made him a national hero. In Poland's leading newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the journalist and former dissident Adam Michnik declared that Herbert had written "the most magnificent pages in the book of Polish honor." And in a Cracow weekly, Milosz wrote: "A great poet has died.... In its history, a country has only a few poets whose words become part of the language that is conveyed from generation to generation. This is what happened with the poetry of Herbert even during his lifetime."

Amid these respectful remembrances, however, dissonant notes could be heard. Michnik referred in his obituary to the falling-out he had had with the poet, who once had been a moral authority to him. Milosz, too, noted that their friendship "had dimmed." Meanwhile, some of Herbert's devoted admirers complained about the treatment he had received from Poland's literary Establishment—preeminently Michnik and Milosz. One of them went so far as to blame "the liberals grouped around Adam Michnik" for the poet's death. "I am ready to bet that [Herbert's] influential internal adversaries had something to do with his not receiving the Nobel Prize," wrote Andrzej Gelberg in the right-wing weekly *Tygodnik Solidarnoûê*. "I cannot stop thinking that if he had received the award, he could have been convinced to seek treatment in Switzerland or America. He would have been able to afford it."

If nothing else, the responses to Herbert's death reveal the deep fault lines that divide Poland's ex-dissident intelligentsia. For many veterans of the Solidarity movement, Herbert embodies the resistance to communism in all of its moral purity. Born in 1924, Herbert participated as a very young man in the anti-Nazi

ZBIGNIEW HERBERT

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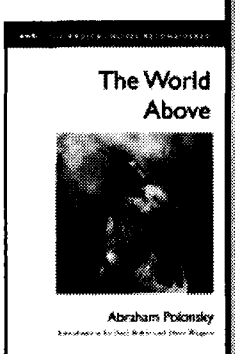

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resistance. After the war, he never flirted with communist ideology and never collaborated with the authorities. During the Stalinist years, he lived in poverty, studying and holding modest, temporary jobs. His first volume of poetry was published only in 1956, the year of political thaw.

Though the other leading poets of postwar Poland were also foes of communism, their life stories were more complex. Szymborska, a thoroughly unpolitical writer, spent many years as a member of the Communist Party, and published in a Cracow literary weekly edited by a party hack. As for Milosz, he served for a while in communist Poland's diplomatic corps before breaking with the regime in 1950 and publishing *The Captive Mind*, a classic of anticommunism. Eventually, he settled down as a professor in Berkeley, California, where he still lives.

In the 1960s, Herbert's poetry won admirers for its hard-edged stoicism, its determination to eschew sentimentality and achieve a cool tranquillity. Seamus Heaney went so far as to compare Herbert to Socrates, observing of Herbert's poetry that "in the exactness of its logic, the temperance of its tone, and the extremity and equanimity of its recognitions, it does resemble what a 20th-century version of what the examined life might be." While his work might have seemed detached from immediate political concerns, his austere voice, heavily indebted to the ancient Stoics, spoke with great power to those who felt the need for intellectual clarity. And as the Solidarity movement grew, Herbert's verses were read even by those who did not have a habit of reading poetry. His 1982 volume, *Report From the Besieged City*, transformed the bitter experience of martial law into moral allegory. Many people, including political prisoners like Adam Michnik, said later that Herbert's poems helped them to emerge from their travails with an unbroken spirit.

The implosion of the communist regime and the arrival of political democracy did not change Herbert's belief in the need for inner purity. And if the power-sharing agreement between Solidarity and the communist regime bothered him in 1989, he became even more bitter when former communists, now singing the praises of the free market, were voted into power in 1993. Unlike Michnik and Milosz, he could not reconcile this turn of events, or Poland's emergence as an open consumer society, with his strong belief in the intrinsic moral righteousness of the Polish people. Poles, he believed, valued "above all the virtue of faithfulness," by which he meant steadfast opposition to communism and communists; for that reason, he saw their willingness to vote for post-communists as a kind of "semantic collapse": "It is the fault of History," he sorrowfully concluded in an interview in 1994, "that it keeps suggesting compromises."

In his poetry, interviews, and political journalism—a genre he adopted after the demise of

> For many veterans of the Solidarity movement, Herbert embodies the resistance to communism in all of its moral purity.

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CZESLAW MILOSZ AND ADAM MICHNIK

JERRY SZOT

communism—Herbert protested against the moral corruption of the new Poland. Some of his more strident positions alarmed Michnik and his liberal allies, who were convinced that democratic politics required compromise and who were increasingly concerned about the influence of xenophobic nationalists and the Roman Catholic Church. Although Herbert was neither a strong nationalist nor an archclericalist, he contributed to right-wing newspapers, where he heaped scorn on his former friends. In 1994 he accused Michnik of Marxist sophistry, of the "betrayal of language [and] of the clarity of concepts."

Herbert also lashed out at Milosz, who had been, until the 1980s, his friend and supporter. Indeed, it was Milosz who edited and co-translated the first English-language volume of Herbert's poetry, published in 1968. But in 1992, Herbert published a bitter attack on Milosz in a poem called "Chodasiewicz." On the surface, the poem was about an obscure Russian-language poet, Wladyslaw Chodasiewicz (1886–1939), who was associated with the Communists and who ended his life in exile. Herbert's poem mocked his ambiguous character, his lack of conviction, and his disloyalty to his nation ("Emigration as a form of existence, it's interesting"). The parallel to Milosz, an émigré and former associate of communists, was unmistakable.

As Herbert's health declined, his bitterness may have had to do with literary rivalries as well as his sense of Poland's moral collapse. In a 1992 poem, "To Czeslaw Milosz," Herbert touched on the widespread impression that he and Milosz were locked in a competition to be the Polish national poet:

> Over the San Francisco Bay
> the lights of stars
> in the morning the fog
> which divides the world
> in two parts
> *and it is unknown which*
> one is more important
> and which is worse
> not even in a whisper is it
> permitted to think that
> both are one and the
> same....

But in the end, the two poets managed something of a reconciliation. "Since our conflicts became public knowledge," Milosz wrote in his obituary, "I feel an obligation to say that approximately a month before his death I called him from California and that we had a cordial, moving conversation, which brought an end to our skirmishes." Milosz continued, "As for [Herbert's] life, it was difficult, and I am sure that what he himself would want to hear today is that it was rewarded with the eternal poetic prize for courage."

IRENA GRUDZINSKA GROSS

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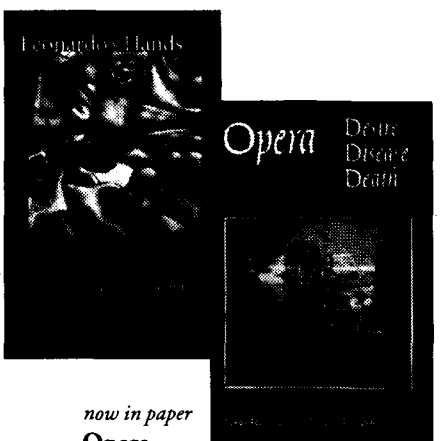

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WE ASKED NINE EXPERTS TO COMMENT ON THE BEST RECENT BOOKS ON **NUCLEAR WEAPONS**.

Jonathan Schell, *Newsday* columnist and author of *The Fate of the Earth* (Avon, 1982) and *The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons* (Holt, 1998).

"The surprise of recent years has been that after the end of the Cold War—just when some of us imagined that we were acquainted with the essential facts of the nuclear age—a remarkable number of books have forced fundamental revisions in our understanding of the historical record. **Gar Alperovitz**'s masterpiece of scholarship, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (Knopf, 1995), lays to rest forever the myth that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was necessary for the defeat of Japan. And **Bruce G. Blair**'s *The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War* (Brookings, 1993) has shown that the doctrine of mutual assured destruction—supposedly the mainstay of policy during much of the Cold War—never corresponded to operational fact, which instead was based on a policy of launch on warning. Thus, the principal strategic debates of the period, however fascinating, concerned an arrangement that never actually existed."

....

Michael Hogan, professor of history at Ohio State University, editor of the journal *Diplomatic History*, editor of *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge, 1996), and author of *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State* (Cambridge, 1998).

"**Campbell Craig**'s insightful *Destroying the Village: Eisenhower and Thermonuclear War* (Columbia, 1998) focuses on Eisenhower's realization that total war was far too perilous a prospect in the thermonuclear age. A system of deterrence, it seemed to Eisenhower, had to be devised, in order both to protect American interests abroad and to prevent conflict. This system rested on two premises: one, that any conflict between superpowers would involve nuclear weapons, and two, that nuclear conflict was to be avoided at all costs. Eisenhower's strategy had important political consequences for the development of a policy of coexistence with the Soviet Union as he, and then John F. Kennedy, came to understand that nuclear weapons presented not the promise of security but a threat against it. **Andreas Wenger**'s *Living With Peril: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nuclear Weapons* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997) adds further important detail to the story of this evolution."

....

Paul Boyer, Merle Curti Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin and author of *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (North Carolina, 2nd ed., 1994) and *Fallout: A Historian Reflects on America's Half-Century Encounter With Nuclear Weapons* (Ohio State, 1998).

"The 1995 controversy over the Smithsonian's *Enola Gay* exhibit spawned several good books, including *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, edited by **Edward T. Linenthal** and **Tom Engelhardt** (Metropolitan, 1996) and *Hiroshima's Shadow: Writings on the Denial of History and the Smithsonian Controversy*, edited by **Kai Bird** and **Lawrence Lifschultz** (Pamphleteer's Press, 1998). But I'm especially partial to an eye-opening book on another topic, *Atomic Spaces: Living on the Manhattan Project* (Illinois, 1997), by cultural historian **Peter Bacon Hales**. Hales unearths rare documents and photographs that illuminate the Manhattan Project's myriad effects on the physical environment it occupied, the people it displaced, and the carefully monitored 'communities' it created for Project personnel. Hales combines careful research with stylistic power, a playful intellect, a strong visual sense, and an unobtrusive but keen moral sensibility."

....

Dan O'Neill, research associate at the University of Alaska Oral History Program and author of *The Firecracker Boys* (St. Martin's, 1995).

"The United States spent more than $5 trillion on the atomic arms race, according to *Atomic Audit: The Cost and Consequences of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Since 1940* (Brookings, 1998), edited by **Stephen I. Schwartz**. Why go into all this now, with the Cold War over and won? For one thing, as we embark on a dubious and costly missile defense system, it is not entirely clear that we have absorbed the lessons of political and fiscal accountability. For sheer reading pleasure, **Paul Boyer**'s *Fallout: A Historian Reflects on America's Half-Century Encounter With Nuclear Weapons* (Ohio State, 1998) contains thoughtful, informed, and well-written observations on topics ranging from Hiroshima to the nuclear freeze movement to *Dr. Strangelove*."

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Gregg Herken, historian and curator of military space at the Smithsonian, and author of *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945–1950* (Knopf, 1981) and *Cardinal Choices: Presidential Science Advising from the Atomic Bomb to SDI* (Oxford, 1992).

"For nearly fifty years, historians argued over the role that espionage played in the development of the Soviet bomb. That debate is now over, thanks to two books that reveal the importance of spy craft: *Bombshell: The Secret Story of America's Unknown Atomic Spy Conspiracy* (Times Books, 1997) by journalists **Joseph Albright** and **Marcia Kunstel**, and *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic*

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Energy, 1939–1956 (Yale, 1994), by **David Holloway**. Now, of course, the big question is how many nations in the present day will enter the 'nuclear club.' **Avner Cohen**'s answer in ***Israel and the Bomb*** (Columbia, 1998) is that *any* state that wants a bomb badly enough will get one—or several—and hence that America's nonproliferation policy is an effort to sweep back the tide."

....

Margot Henriksen, associate professor of history at the University of Hawaii and author of *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age* (California, 1997).

"The most important recent works on nuclear weapons and nuclear culture are perhaps those that argue that Americans did not fully succumb to a somnolent apathy about the potential for mass destruction in their midst. **Allan M. Winkler** in ***Life Under a Cloud: American Anxiety About the Atom*** (Oxford, 1993) detects discrete periods of antinuclear activism after Hiroshima that punctured (but did not completely eliminate) American atomic apathy. A different flashpoint, the 1995 melee over the proposed display of the *Enola Gay*, informs the passionate (if overpsychoanalyzed) treatment by **Robert Jay Lifton** and **Greg Mitchell**, ***Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial*** (Grosset/Putnam, 1995). Lifton and Mitchell demonstrate to what extent Hiroshima lays open a 'raw nerve' in America's emotional life—a nerve that runs through the wonderfully hilarious, postmodern novel by **Phyllis Burke**, ***Atomic Candy*** (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989)."

....

Helen Caldicott, former president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, a leader of the international nuclear freeze movement of the 1980s, a contributor to *The Progressive*, and author of *A Desperate Passion: An Autobiography* (Norton, 1997).

"It is difficult to distill a meaningful account of a complex, global movement from huge quantities of files, data, and oral histories, but in ***Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954–1970*** (Stanford, 1998), **Lawrence Wittner** has done just that. The second volume of Wittner's projected trilogy, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, it is a story of official duplicity ('Keep them confused as to fission and fusion,' urged Eisenhower), espionage (the CIA, the USIA, and the FBI all systematically monitored peace and disarmament groups), and the heroism of those men and women who worked to free humanity from the menace of nuclear annihilation. Wittner has produced a useful reference tool for activists and government officials who truly wish to represent the future of the planet."

Paul Lawrence Rose, professor of history at Penn State University and author of *Heisenberg and the Nazi Atomic Bomb Project: A Study in German Culture* (California, 1998).

"Transcribed from secretly taped discussions between Werner Heisenberg and the other German scientists interned in England in 1945, the recently declassified Farm Hall documents reveal that the Nazis were never close to acquiring atomic weapons: Heisenberg lacked crucial information about the small critical mass of U235 necessary for building a bomb. The transcripts also highlight the moral bankruptcy of the German scientists: They falsified the history of their project in order to give the impression that they were morally opposed to building Hitler a bomb, and they sanctimoniously criticized Niels Bohr for his involvement with the Allied bomb. The first edition of the Farm Hall transcripts, ***Operation Epsilon: The Farm Hall Transcripts*** (California, 1993), includes a valuable introduction by Sir Charles Frank, the British scientific intelligence officer who oversaw the original surveillance. **J. Bernstein** and **David Cassidy**'s ***Hitler's Uranium Club: The Secret Recordings at Farm Hall*** (American Institute of Physics, 1995) is more accessible, thanks to its lucid commentary on the often strange—sometimes hilarious—text."

....

David Holloway, professor of political science at Stanford University and author of *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939–1956* (Yale, 1994).

Apart from the *Enola Gay* controversy and issues of proliferation, Holloway observes, the nuclear threat is not as prominent a subject as it was ten or fifteen years ago. "It does continue to exist, however," he says, "and is analyzed in different, but quite specific, ways in two fascinating and disturbing books. The first is ***The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis***, edited by **Ernest R. May** and **Philip D. Zelikow** (Harvard, 1997). This book contains the transcripts of the White House discussions during the most dangerous nuclear crisis to date. These extraordinary documents convey the tortuous steps by which the crisis was resolved, and also the unsettling possibility that it all could have ended differently. In ***The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons*** (Princeton, 1993) **Scott Douglas Sagan** exposes a frightening history of near accidents with nuclear weapons. He argues that the organizations that handle nuclear weapons can never be completely reliable and that the danger of nuclear weapons accidents will therefore exist as long as we have these weapons."

RICK PERLSTEIN

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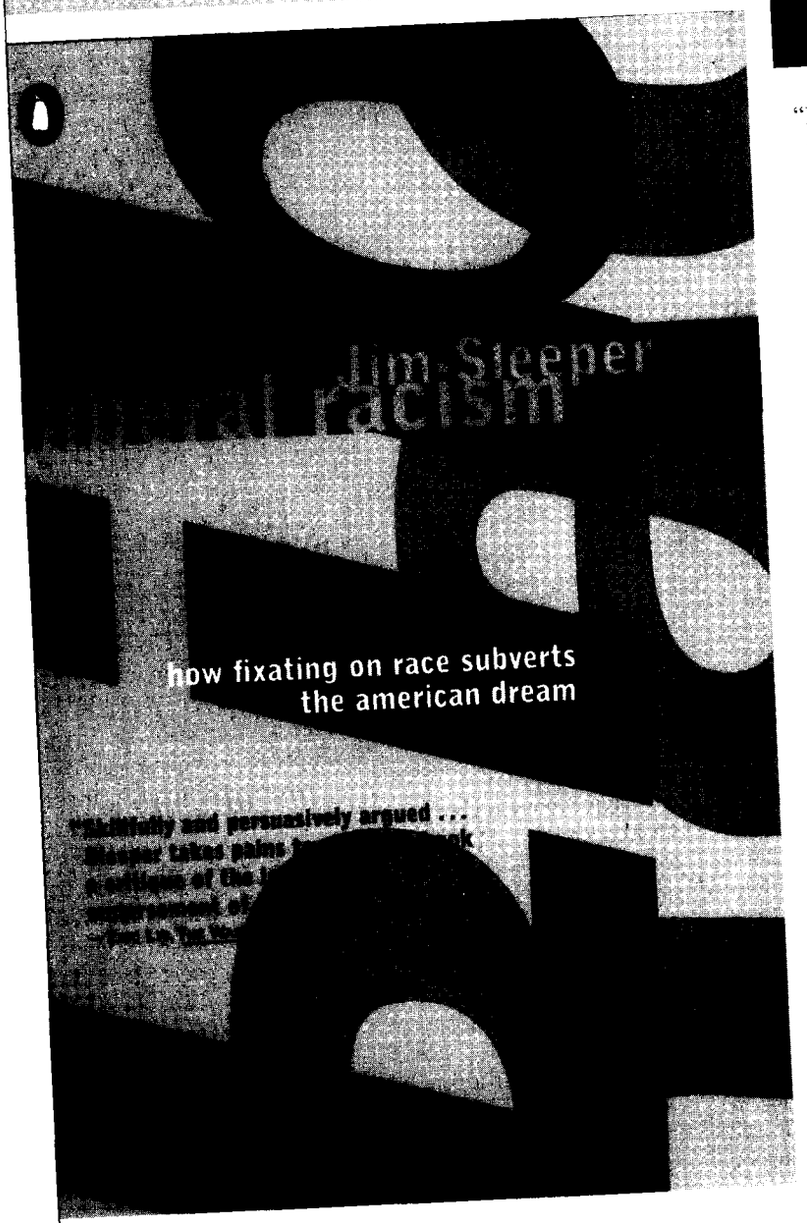
Is there anything left to say about race in America?

Yes. And Jim Sleeper's *Liberal Racism* says it well.



"Like other writers, Jim Sleeper emphasizes the importance of overcoming a fragmenting culture, but he has a keener sense of the role of market capitalism, as well as liberal ideology. His *Liberal Racism* is the most intellectually sophisticated of these critiques, the most resistant to ideological formula. It is also the only one that **treats race relations as more than a crisis in black and white.**"
—Jackson Lears, *Los Angeles Times*

"Sleeper's essays on black identity and what he contends is our lost civic culture are particularly strong, especially the chapter on Harvard Law Prof. Randall Kennedy and Boston University economist Glenn Loury, two of the most **thoughtful and intriguing** black intellectuals in the nation today." —Don Wycliff, *Commonweal*

"**A compelling alternative to current liberal thinking**, one that combines stalwart integrationist principles with a deep concern about the wretched conditions of millions of black Americans." —Sean Wilentz, *Slate*

"[Sleeper]challenges liberals, who once fought to help America rise above color, to get back to their abandoned program of a transracial civic faith. **Read *Liberal Racism* and then, if you dare, take a long look in the mirror.**" —C. Eric Lincoln

"Jim Sleeper courageously writes about what can only be whispered in the Academy and in the bowels of bureaucracy: an identity politics that refuses to identify itself."
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Inside*Publishing*

RAVING MARXISM

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, THERE HAVE been few magazines more hostile to the concerns of transatlantic liberals and leftists than the glossy, in-your-face British political monthly *LM*. In recent months, for example, *LM* has accused environmentalists of peddling "phony health worries, hollow compassion, and cod-socialist proposals" and of harboring a desire to purge humanity from the earth in a redemptive act of "environmental annihilation." The magazine attacked a proposed gun-control policy in Britain as one of a series of "authoritarian measures" based on "a knee jerk reaction to a climate of hysteria and fear." And it has savaged those who claim that global capitalism is in crisis: "This outlook can only serve to frustrate the development of economic and human potential."

One might think that such a magazine was backed by a pro-business think tank or a right-wing media baron. But the truth could not be more different: *LM* is an outgrowth of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), a small Trotskyite splinter group; for most of its life, the journal was known as *Living Marxism*. Now in its eleventh year of publication, with a circulation of barely fifteen thousand, the magazine dropped the word "Marxism" from its name two years ago and completed its strange trip from the dour, sectarian world of the far left to a Day-Glo-colored, rave-music-inspired cyberlibertarianism that involves a peculiar, and sometimes creepy, mixture of unfettered capitalism, scientist worship, and even pro-Serb apologetics.

One thing is certain: *LM* has never looked like the typical publication of a British Trotskyite sect. It has always been a glossy and smartly put-together monthly review rather than a drab party newspaper. But looking good was always a priority for the RCP; after new recruits passed an exam, which tested them on "correct" party ideology, they received a clothing allowance. For a time, the RCP was known in left circles as the "Socialist Workers Party with hair gel."

Living Marxism hit newsstands in 1988, under the stewardship of Mick Hume, who previously edited the party weekly *the next step*. Soon it was publishing a dyspeptic series of articles on fin de siècle culture, grandiosely titled "The Midnight in the Century Thesis." "We live in an era of reaction, an essentially dark hour for those who support human liberation," intoned a 1992 article by Frank Richards (the nom de plume of many *LM* contributors, including Frank Furedi, *LM*'s main theoretician and a sociologist at the University of Kent). Abandoning traditional Marxist beliefs in class struggle, Richards lamented the failure of "dynamic forces" to emerge, though he never identifies what shape these new forces might take. Meanwhile, *Living Marxism* was endorsing an eclectic blend of causes. The magazine has taken aim at animal rights: "enough of this monkey business," one writer inveighed. "A critical defense of humanism and the human potential is long overdue." And in 1992, it stridently opposed Western intervention in the Bosnian war, jeering that "many of the erstwhile liberal critics of western colonialism have now become the loudest supporters of the West invading other countries in pursuit of its bogus 'humanitarianism.'"

LM endorses a Day-Glo-colored, rave-music-inspired cyberlibertarianism.

In 1995 the magazine defined a new enemy. "Relativism," it declared, "provides the intellectual underpinning for the new authoritarianism." Castigating ruling elites for their "avant-garde cynicism," and "liberal anti-extremist sentiment," *Living Marxism* adopted some of the language of

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right-wing cultural critique. The shift in emphasis was ratified by *Living Marxism*'s "manifesto for our times," *The Point Is to Change It*. As Hume characterized the tract, "It bears little resemblance to a manifesto from the familiar radical tradition. It is not a book of complaints about the problems of exploitation, unemployment and poverty created by the problems of capitalism."

And indeed, the manifesto sounded more like Ayn Rand than Karl Marx—a harbinger of things to come. In 1996 the RCP folded, and the project lost its Trotskyite mooring. At that time, *Living Marxism* metamorphosed into *LM*. Turning to a high-tech, rave aesthetic and an editorial tone that owes more to the cyberanarchism of *Wired* and *Mondo 2000* than to the earnest leftism of *The Nation*, the magazine took on a new motto. No longer a party organ, *LM* now "takes to the stand in defense of life, liberty and having it all." Appropriately, the magazine sports a lively alt.culture section, which surveys the books, styles, music, and technology of the moment: In recent issues, former *Face* editor Sheryll Garatt praised club culture, and "dissident technologist" Nigel Burke defended Microsoft CEO and "global hate figure" Bill Gates. A section called Futures celebrates scientific progress in all its forms, including animal research and genetically altered food.

In 1997 *LM* made a considerable stir in Britain when it defended Bosnian Serbs against charges of running prison camps. In "The Picture That Fooled the World," Thomas Deichmann, a German freelance journalist and a longtime defender of the Serbian cause, accused the British television network ITN of falsely representing a Serbian camp in Trnopolje as a detention center. He argued that "there was no barbed wire fence surrounding the Trnopolje camp. It was not a prison, and certainly not a 'concentration camp,' but a collection center for refugees, many of whom went there seeking safety and could leave again if they wished." (ITN has since sued *LM* for libel, defending its groundbreaking reporting as accurate.)

So where does this magazine stand? There is speculation in Britain that the magazine, with its well-maintained Web site, its slick production values, and its right-wing affinities, receives funds from a shady, white South African millionaire or from corporations sympathetic to the magazine's anti-environmental line. None of this has been proven conclusively, and Hume has offered to pay double *LM*'s stipend to anyone who can find out where it comes from. "What amuses me," he says, "is that people don't seem to be able to work out for themselves exactly what our hidden agenda is. One month I'm this kind of Stalinist Serbomaniac, and then the next month I'm this neofascist tool of business."

If no one seems to know where the magazine gets its money, neither does anyone seem to know what *LM* now stands for. Living Monopolists? Lapsed Marxists? Lost Marbles? Hume asserts simply that the new title "is a concession to cool Britannia: The trendy thing in the British magazine world was for everybody to reduce their title to initials."

MATTHEW PRICE

WATER WORLDS

IF IT IS TRUE, AS CICERO ONCE SAID, THAT "the Roman people hate private luxury but delight in public magnificence," the same cannot be said for twentieth-century Californians. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the private swimming pools of the California elite: In a region shaped by water scarcity, what better status symbol than a vast, limpid, unused swimming pool—or even two?

In *The Springboard in the Pond: An Intimate History of the Swimming Pool* (MIT, January), the Dutch architectural historian Thomas A. P. van Leeuwen presents an idiosyncratic cross section of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century swimming pools. Very few public pools enter his narrative, nor does he bother with the rectangular pools common to suburban patios or the freestanding circular pools in the backyards of modest homes. Instead, starting with King Ludwig II of Bavaria, van Leeuwen charts the evolution of the swimming pool from one luxury palace to the next. Most of the pools' owners were eccentric millionnaires who did not swim. Rather, they hired performers, most often scantily clad women, to enact, or to awaken, their aquatic fantasies. In perhaps the most extraordinary and pathetic of these tales, publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst built house after house equipped with ever more lavish swimming pools—all in hopes of wooing ex–Ziegfeld Follies actress Marion Davies, who loved to swim. Hearst's Neptune Pool is announced by an ancient temple front of unknown provenance and adorned with marble neoclassical statues.

Van Leeuwen likens the hydrophobia of the rich to that of the swan, whose relationship to water is one of proximity but not of intimacy: "Of

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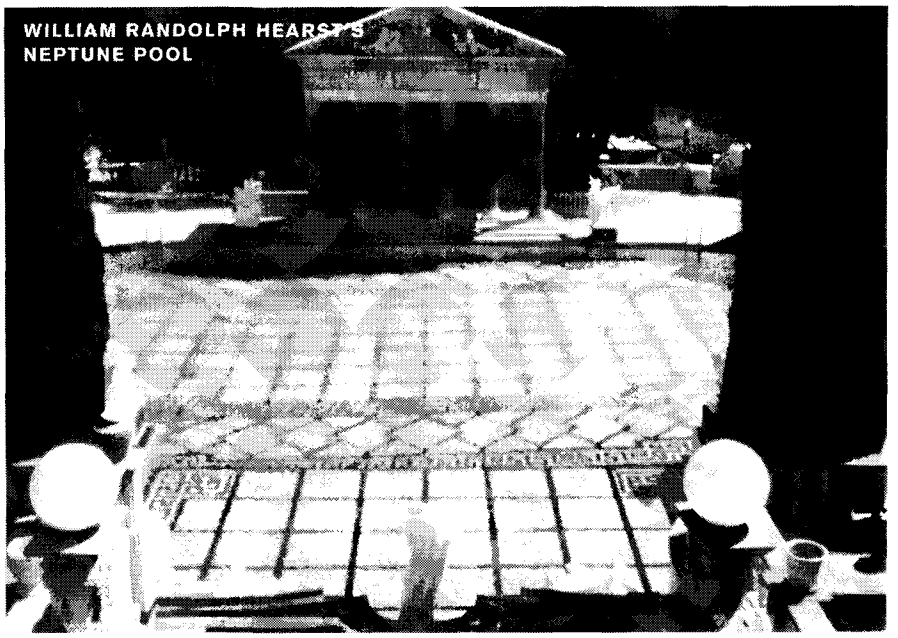
all the amphibians, the swan seems to like water least," he declares. It is van Leeuwen's contention that the celebrities, kings, and millionnaires mostly kept their waters brilliantly empty, like garden fountains or reflecting ponds. In the 1930s, it was actually faddish for movie stars to be photographed navigating their swimming pools by canoe.

Increasingly, van Leeuwen finds, contemporary Californians have given up on even pretending that swimming pools are for swimming. Frightened of air pollutants, or just bored, they are installing expensive filtration systems to make their swimming pools hospitable to Japanese *nishiki-koi*. The most fashionable members of the upwardly mobile carp family, these fish sell for several hundred dollars apiece. Clucks van Leeuwen of today's West Coast affluent, "First they banned the springboard, then they banned their children, and finally they banned themselves. Now the road is free for a new generation of swimmers: goldfish, koi, even sharks begin to populate the family pool."

The ancient Romans, it must be said, would have had none of this. Communal bathing was not only commonplace in the Roman world; it was a crucial site of social interaction, and the baths themselves were as noisy and colorful as those California pools are pristine and still. As Garrett Fagan, assistant professor of classics at Pennsylvania State University, details in *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (Michigan, May), Romans met at the baths not only to wash and exercise but also for hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, which they often consumed as they soaked, and to exchange dinner party invitations. Although the literary and archaeological record is fragmentary, Fagan surmises that men and women bathed together as a matter of course at many reputable establishments. Most likely, illicit lovers met at the baths for sexual encounters, and the bathhouses themselves may have provided prostitutes in the guise of clothes guards. One legend has it that a demonically possessed nun from Alexandria would go to the baths and attempt to seduce men of the cloth. As the story goes, writes Fagan, "Aroused clerics were so obsessed...that their sleep was marred by nocturnal emissions."

If Roman bathing habits would have galled today's polite society, they were not without their critics even in Rome. The poet Marcus Valerius Martialis, himself a prodigious bather, writes disparagingly of Menogenes, a contemporary who prowled the bathhouses in search of dinner invitations, which he extracted from his acquaintances by hounding them with relentless flattery. And some Romans used their unlucky fellow bathers as a captive audience for their poetry and songs: Martial, having reached wit's end with the aspiring poet Ligurinus, complained, "You read to me as I stand, you read to me as I sit, you read to me as I run, you read to me as I shit. I flee to the baths: You boom in my ear. I head for the pool: I'm not allowed to swim."

But if Martial was intolerant, he had nothing on Seneca. The poor Stoic, who was not exactly given to pleasures of the flesh, actually lived above a bathhouse at Baiae. One can only imagine his displeasure as the sounds of the baths—"the slaps of the masseur, the song of the loud bather, the roars of the food stall owners, the rumpus accompanying the arrest of a thief"—wafted up to him as he wrote his *Epistles*, which contain a substantial tirade on the subject.



WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST'S NEPTUNE POOL

"What is bathing when you think about it—oil, sweat, filth, greasy water, everything loathsome."

Classicists have long marveled at the Roman propensity to bathe not only in mixed-sex tanks but also at establishments that catered to all strata of society, from emperors to slaves. No evidence exists to suggest that the baths excluded anyone or that slaves bathed at different times from senators, or even in different rooms. According to Fagan, however, most scholars wrongly conclude that the mingling of bathers from up and down the Roman hierarchy made the baths social levelers. Why presume, he asks, that the normally rigid Roman social order would dissolve in the waters of the imperial *thermae*? Despite the bathers'

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nakedness, he argues, they were not for an instant stripped of their social standing. Rather, the baths were thick with hierarchy: Aristocrats announced their status with jewels, elaborate drinking vessels, sumptuous foods, lavish oils, and large retinues of slaves. The Roman elite expressed its contempt for the masses not by shrinking away from the great unwashed in palaces of Ludwigian dimensions, but in virtually the opposite fashion: They lorded their affluence over commoners and slaves in the most intimate possible setting.

The baths' interiors, it can be surmised, were characterized by a sybaritic loveliness that would have made Hearst blush: Tile mosaics, marble paneling, statues, fountains, granite columns, and painted stucco were all in evidence. But the bathwaters themselves left something to be desired. Not only did the Romans bathe in communal tanks, sharing waters that were neither chemically treated nor frequently changed, but the ill, as well as the healthy, were expressly exhorted to bathe, because the medical wisdom of the day heralded the bathwaters as a panacea for innumerable complaints. It was not, however, advised that Romans soak open wounds in the baths: As Celsus cautioned, "This renders the wound both wet and dirty, which normally results in gangrene." Marcus Aurelius, it seems, knew what he was talking about when he wrote, "What is bathing when you think about it—oil, sweat, filth, greasy water, everything loathsome." Evidently, the West Coast millionaires who are too health conscious to set foot in their own lavish pools would agree.

LAURA SECOR

HEY, JOE...

WHAT WITH A GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS threatening to bring back deflation, fascism on the rise from Belgrade to Srinagar, and zoot-suited American teenagers going wild for swing music, it seems the 1930s are back in style. Of course, in the field of Soviet history, the 1930s never go out of style; and the University of Chicago's Sheila Fitzpatrick, one of the discipline's leading lights, has been writing about the decade for more than twenty-five years. Since 1991, she has been rifling through a treasure trove of previously off-limits Russian archives, and in her latest book, *Everyday Stalinism* (Oxford), she takes up the once unanswerable question: What was life under Stalin like for the average guy?

Even more than most history, Russian history is always written in the context of current events and ideological concerns—as Fitzpatrick well knows. She gained prominence in the 1970s as a member of a group of historians who came to be called revisionists because they challenged Cold War–era views of Stalinism. The revisionists, notably Fitzpatrick, Roberta Manning, and J. Arch Getty, were social historians. They wanted to write Annales-style history from the bottom up, concentrating on economics, demographics, popular culture, and the everyday decisions of ordinary people. But in the world of Sovietology, this sort of history ran smack up against the model used by historians like Richard Pipes and Robert Conquest, which held that the Soviet regime kept its citizens in a state of terror.

Conquest, for example, described the purges of the late 1930s as a planned effort by Stalin to annihilate all possible opposition. The revisionists, by contrast, focused on how the purges had served the interests of a rising class of the Soviet *nomenklatura*, largely peasants and workers recently recruited into the party who moved up through the hierarchy by denouncing their superiors. Similarly, with respect to the large-scale, forced collectivization of 1929–1932, the revisionists emphasized such bottom-up concerns as the prevalence of peasant resistance and the incorporation of aspects of communal land ownership into the Soviet *kolkhoz*, or collective farm.

The totalitarians (as the revisionists' opponents, somewhat perversely, came to be called) reacted angrily to this new historiographical trend. "The revisionists look for collaboration between the regime and society," says Pipes, a former adviser to Ronald Reagan and perhaps the country's foremost Sovietologist. "But people had to collaborate [with the regime] because their lives were at stake." To insist that ordinary citizens were not victims but eager participants in Soviet society, he says, "shows terrible insensitivity to the people living under these conditions."

Even now, nearly a decade after the end of the Cold War, animosity between Pipes's and Fitzpatrick's camps lingers. When Vladimir Brovkin, a Pipes protégé, failed to receive tenure at Harvard in 1995, there was considerable turmoil. A similar brouhaha followed the rejection last year of Brovkin's proposal to edit a series of scholarly volumes on the gulag for Yale University Press. "The revisionists now control the academic chairs," Pipes complains. "They

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dominate the discussion, and they criticize very severely those who don't agree with their views."

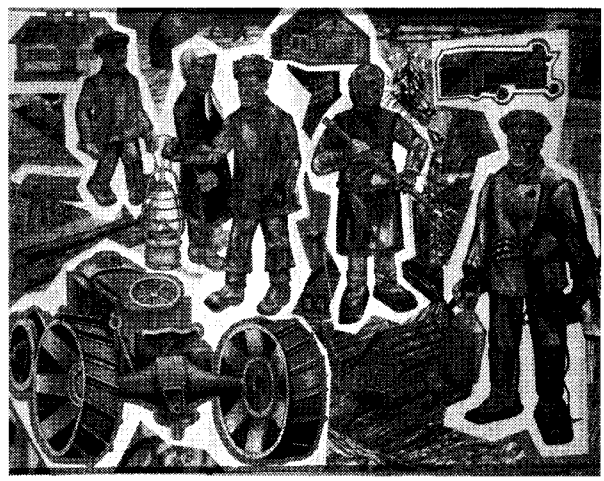
To Fitzpatrick, Pipes's criticisms seem woefully out-of-date. "For the new generation of post-Soviet historians, this argument is ancient history," she says. "My students study it as a historiographical issue of the 1970s in an introductory graduate course." Indeed, the old issues don't take up much room in *Everyday Stalinism*—though it's worth noting that Fitzpatrick seems less vehemently opposed to top-down history than she once might have been. For one thing, she opens the book with a chapter about the Communist Party. "Few histories of everyday life start with a chapter on government and bureaucracy," she writes, "but it is one of the peculiarities of our subject that the state can never be kept out, try though we may."

The state, she explains, played a role in creating that most basic of Marxist categories, social class. In the USSR, class was an explicit category on every citizen's internal passport, the standard Soviet ID card. Class designation was enormously important in everything from university admissions to allotments of ration cards. Naturally, people tried to get themselves classified as workers or peasants, and as a result, Fitzpatrick argues, class ceased to be a reliable indicator of social or economic background. In a chapter titled "Insulted and Injured," she describes the lengths to which people would go to shed unfavorable class designations: Noblewomen married lathe operators; children of priests took out newspaper ads renouncing their parents; the daughters of kulaks (rich peasants) married the sons of *bednota* (poor peasants), who might qualify for such luxuries as a room of their own in a communal apartment.

Everyday Stalinism treats such quotidian personal dramas seriously. Fitzpatrick chronicles the shopper's hell of the early Soviet city, a byzantine tangle of rationing, hard-currency stores for foreigners and the rich, farmers' markets with prices five times higher than those in state stores, "closed distribution" company shops for employees only, and clothing emporiums with lines six thousand people long. She examines the upwardly mobile segments of 1930s society, including both the "hero-workers," who exceeded factory production quotas and were rewarded with cars and university educations, and the polar explorers and aviators, whose exploits riveted the newspaper-reading public.

Fitzpatrick attributes great significance to the letters Soviet citizens sent to politicians. These letters were frequently used to plead a case in a personal affair or to denounce a neighbor (she recently co-edited a collection, *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789–1989*). But just as often, they were used to express opinions on political matters. People wrote to Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov to advise him not to trust the British, French, or Germans; they wrote to the popular Sergey Kirov, head of the Leningrad party administration, to complain about food shortages. When local officials stripped them of their voting rights, Mennonites and Tolstoyans won them back by sending protest letters to the USSR's president, Mikhail Kalinin.

Another hot issue, both for Fitzpatrick and for a younger generation of postrevisionist historians, is the Soviet institution of *blat*—variously translated as "pull," "connections," and "having lots of friends." Traditionally, *blat* was seen as a coping mechanism for the inefficient socialist economy. But as the corruption scandals of the last few years have shown, *blat* continues to play a strong role in today's nominally capitalist Russia. This raises the possibility that *blat* is not an artifact of socialism but a holdover from a primordial Russian past—an echo of the lawlessness and cronyism of the court of Ivan the Terrible. Fitzpatrick notes that in retrospect many features of Stalinism seem more like throwbacks to a precapitalist or even premodern world, rather than an alternative form of modernity.



SCALA/ART RESOURCE, NY

Under Stalin, children of priests took out newspaper ads renouncing their parents.

So what lessons do the Stalinist 1930s hold for us? Fitzpatrick says she emerged from her research "with the conviction that the main thing in understanding this society is that it's a society of shortages. Everything—getting food, clothes, childrens' shoes—is hard. Attention is enormously concentrated on that. This fear of not having enough to eat, starving, freezing—these go right through the society. Almost every time you have a question about why something happened, the answer seems to be related to food-supply problems."

In a time when Russia and much of the rest of the world has been abruptly plunged into dire poverty, it is an analysis that seems worth considering.

MATT STEINGLASS

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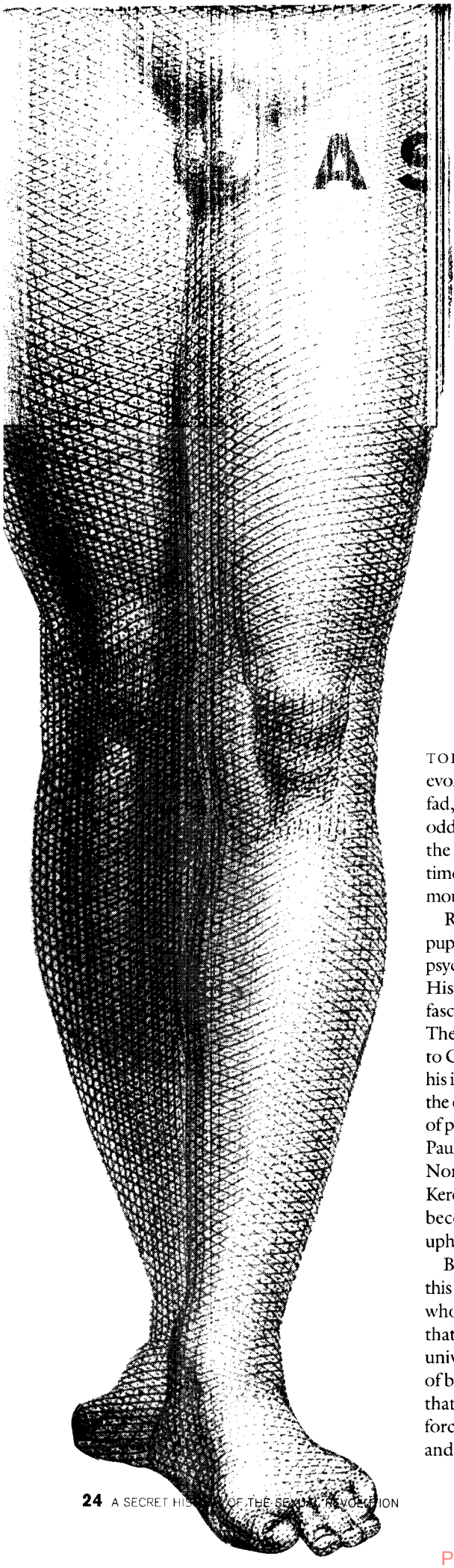

A SECRET HISTORY OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

THE REPRESSIOI

TODAY THE NAME WILHELM REICH evokes a dim memory of the orgone box fad, or, more likely, nothing at all. But odd though it may seem (and it is far from the oddest thing about him), there was a time when Wilhelm Reich enjoyed enormous prestige on both sides of the Atlantic.

Reich was once Sigmund Freud's star pupil and an important player in the radical psychoanalytic movement of the 1930s. His diagnosis of the neurotic roots of fascism would influence thinkers from Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. And his ideas about the transcendent power of the orgasm inspired an astonishing number of postwar American writers and critics—Paul Goodman, Saul Bellow, Irving Howe, Norman Mailer, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs—who would become central figures in the cultural upheavals of the 1950s and 1960s.

But leaving an intellectual legacy of this kind would not have interested Reich, who late in his career came to believe that he had unraveled the secrets of the universe, and that he could cure the ills of body and mind, nature and society. All that stood in his way were the combined forces of social and sexual repression—and a global conspiracy involving *The New Republic*, Joseph Stalin, and the U.S Food and Drug Administration. This conspiracy—or at least the zeal of the FDA—would turn this self-declared prophet into an outlaw and, ultimately, a martyr: After defying the FDA, Reich died in a federal prison at the age of sixty.

At the core of Reich's peripatetic career is a venerable, if unfashionable, belief: Under the mantle of social convention lurks a natural, instinctual self, and the release of that self's energies from society's repression is the only way to achieve psychic health, political justice, and spiritual well-being. This notion finds few serious takers today. Inside the academy, the descendants of French poststructuralism mock the very idea of a natural self, while outside the academy conventional wisdom has rediscovered the virtues of repression. To find devoted Reichians one must travel to remote outposts in Oregon or Maine, where his most colorful—and most loyal—intellectual acolytes quixotically strive to communicate with extraterrestrials and disprove the basic tenets of twentieth-century science and medicine, while maintaining a lonely vigil against Stalinist threats.

Though the academy may have banished Reich to the margins, his name continues to surface in the stew of

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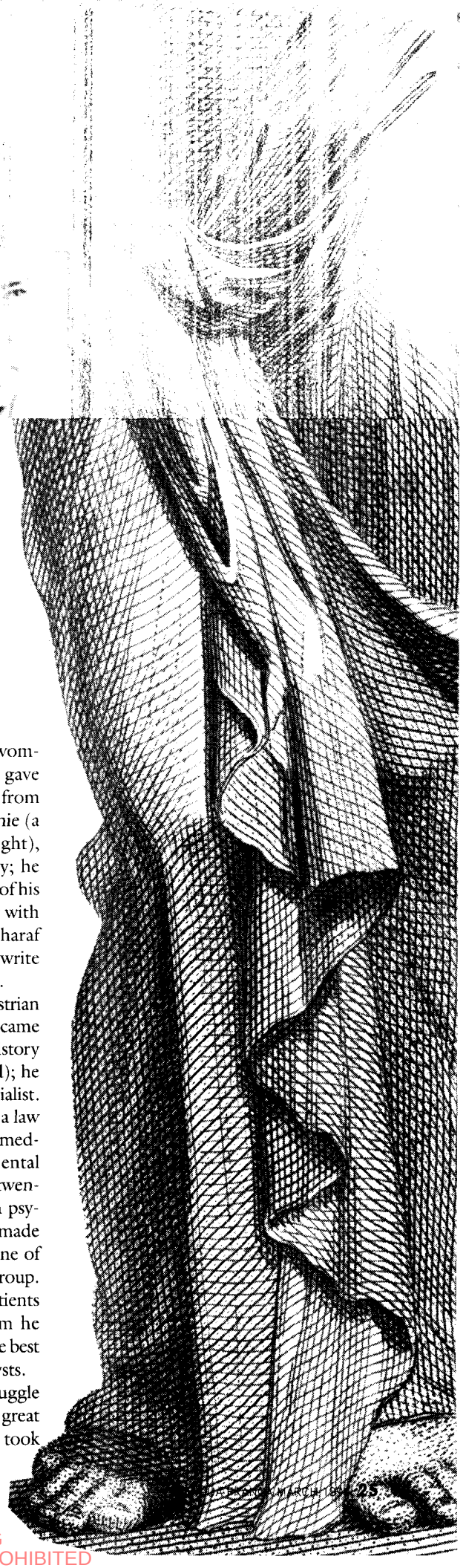
OF WILHELM REICH

BY **HAL COHEN**



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postmodern popular culture. A memoir written by his son, Peter, enjoys a cult following among British schoolboys; Dusan Makavejev's 1971 film, *WR: Mysteries of the Organism,* turns up from time to time at art houses; and the British singer Kate Bush even wrote a song called "Cloudbusting" about Reich's persecution by the U.S. government. Who was Wilhelm Reich? A social critic or a snake-oil salesman? A visionary or a madman? A misunderstood scientific genius or a dangerous quack?

Or all of the above?

THE BIZARRE life of Wilhelm Reich began in fin de siècle Europe and ended in Cold War America. He was born in 1897 to secular Jewish parents in Austrian Galicia. His father owned a successful cattle ranch, and his mother came from an extremely wealthy landowning family.

Reich acquired sexual knowledge at an early age. At twelve he watched his tutor seduce his mother. He was also twelve when he revealed this fact to his father—a jealous and brutish man who regularly referred to his wife as "whore" anyway—resulting soon after in his mother's suicide. A year later, young Wilhelm bedded a household servant. In his university days, he was an insatiable womanizer; by most accounts, he never gave up the habit. Nor was it separated from his work: He met his first wife, Annie (a noted psychoanalyst in her own right), when she came to him for therapy; he was known to have seduced several of his other patients; and he had an affair with the wife of his assistant Myron Sharaf (who would nonetheless go on to write a sympathetic biography of Reich).

Reich was an officer in the Austrian army during World War I, which he came to see as the watershed event in the history of Europe (and thus of humankind); he returned from service a devout socialist. He enrolled in college in Vienna as a law student, but he quickly switched to medicine and became interested in mental health. By the time he was in his twenties, Reich had entered the Vienna psychoanalytic circle, where he quickly made his mark, earning a reputation as one of the most insightful therapists in the group. Freud would soon be referring patients to this precocious protégé, whom he declared to have "der beste Kopf" (the best head) of all the Vienna psychoanalysts.

But while Freud regarded the struggle between repression and instinct with great ambivalence, Reich unhesitatingly took

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the side of instinct. In various works that would later be collected in *Character Analysis* (1933), Reich worked out his first, and perhaps most influential psychoanalytic idea: character armor. He believed that all people—even (or rather, especially) polite and apparently straightforward people—exhibit defensive character traits; and he recommended that the analyst identify and dismantle this armor, thus (contra Freud) controlling the direction of therapy and forcing the patient to express, even violently, his deepest impulses. "Human beings live emotionally on the surface," he explained. "In order to get to the core, where the natural, the normal, the healthy is, you have to get through that middle layer. And in that middle layer there is terror." Culture, he believed, alienated people from their true selves, which meant that any civilized individual was by definition neurotic. This premise led Reich to two conclusions: First, everyone needs therapy; second, to create truly healthy individuals, therapy is insufficient—society itself must be changed.

It was not long before Reich took another step away from Freud. He concluded that character armor physically manifested itself in "muscular armor"—that is, actual somatic tension. Freud believed that physical maladies were often the result of psychological problems, but Reich came to believe the inverse: that the etiology of psychological illness (and thus of psychological well-being) was located in the body. While Freud treated neuroses in order to alleviate physical problems, Reich reversed the causality and worked to relieve bodily tension in order to remove neuroses. Thus the twofold nature of Reichian therapy was established: The talking cure would be directed at dismantling a patient's character armor and allowing the natural self to emerge, while deep breathing, rhythmic movements, and the therapist's physical contact with the patient would relieve the patient's muscular armor and thus alleviate the related neuroses.

Even now, with psychoanalysis in eclipse, some claim that Reich's insights inform the basic premises of psychotherapy. "To the extent that there is any real psychology around today," says Dr. Richard Schwartzman, a Reichian therapist who practices in Philadelphia, "it is character analysis." Reich, he explains, "was the first to recognize that the content of what a patient communicated was secondary to the way a person presented himself, which is always some form of defense." Meanwhile, alternative therapies of the 1970s, such as primal scream, bioenergetics, emotional release, massage, and bodywork, owe Reich a profound debt. Many non-Reichian psychologists and psychiatrists still make use of his therapeutic techniques—deep breathing, rhythmic body movements, and so on—as part of an array of treatments.

Not surprisingly, Reich's efforts to release his patients from their muscular armor led him toward Freud's work on sex. In books like *The Function of the Orgasm* and *Genitality*, both published in 1927, he argued that sexual dissatisfaction was tied to all physical tensions and thus to all neuroses. Muscular tension—tightness in the hips, buttocks, stomach, thighs, and other parts of the body—prevented the freedom of movement that was required for a good orgasm. So, in Reich's model, the ability to achieve "orgastic potency" became the key to a healthy psychological life, for both men and women. The relief of neuroses and the achievement of superior orgasms became synonymous. Put simply, Reich believed that people who have good sex are happy and productive and that happy and productive people have good sex; anything undermining this equation was a pathology.

Of course, Reich was not the first to notice that having orgasms tended to have a positive effect on people, but never before had the orgasm enjoyed such a privileged place in therapeutic practice; Reichian orgasms were not a means, they were the end. For all his frankness, however, Reich says little about his criteria for evaluating a good orgasm. He is generally of the "you'll know it when you have one" school. And these orgasms could only occur in certain circumstances: In spite of his reputation as a sexual radical, Reich was in some respects quite conventional. He insisted that a good orgasm could be achieved only by genital-to-genital contact between a man and a woman. He had no problem with masturbation per se but considered it nothing more than a healthy expression of desire; there was no good orgasm to be had that way. Similarly, while he was tolerant of various kinds of sexual contact, he dismissed "homosexuality, sexual intercourse with animals, and other forms of perversion."

While the good orgasm represented the health of the individual, Reich also came to believe it represented the health of society as well. In the late 1920s, once he had established himself as an important psychoanalyst in Vienna, Reich branched out on his own and created the sex-pol movement, combining his therapeutic interests with increasingly leftist politics. He began this work in Vienna, but after being expelled from the Austrian Social Democratic Party in 1930 because of his sexual radicalism, he moved to Berlin.

There he joined the German Communist Party and became active in the leftist psychoanalytic circle that included Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Otto Fenichel. By contemporary standards, and even by today's, Reich's sex-pol ideas were daring: He conducted frank workshops on sexual health, advocated free birth control and access to abortion, and endorsed adolescent experimentation with sex. A healthy and free society, he felt, would have to be composed of healthy and free individuals—sexually healthy, orgastically potent people. Such an erotic utopia required economic and labor conditions that allowed leisure time and living conditions amenable to unencumbered sexual relations (a subject about which conventional Marxist theory has little to say). This meant social and economic gender equality and the replacement of marriage with "serial monogamy" so that each partner could pursue the most satisfying sex life.

By 1931 Reich had convinced the German communists to establish the German Association for Proletarian Sex Politics, with himself firmly in charge: At its height, the organization had forty thousand members. The sex-pol movement's ideology was crystallized in Reich's treatise on social and sexual repression, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), a bold synthesis of Freud and Marx. In it he contended that rightist repressive forces in society did not operate by brute force or deception. Nor were they expressions of national destiny. Rather, the phenomenal success of both ideologies derived from their promise of release through violence and force, coupled with the countervailing promise of state suppression of that which the unenlightened masses feared in themselves and which was, for Reich, the key to everything: their sexuality.

Reich's understandings of sexuality and power rank among his most impor-

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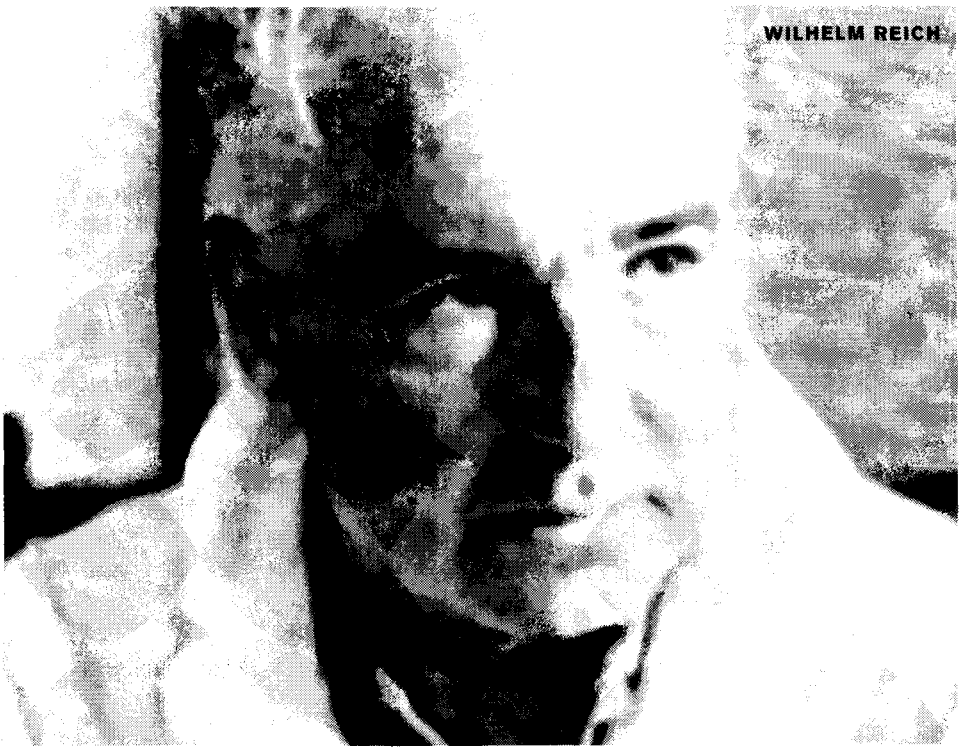
NEVER BEFORE HAD THE ORGASM ENJOYED SUCH A PRIVILEGED PLACE IN THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE: REICHIAN ORGASMS WERE NOT A MEANS, THEY WERE THE END.


WILHELM REICH

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tant work. His ideas strongly influenced such important books of social criticism as Erich Fromm's *Escape From Freedom* (1941), Theodor Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), and Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955). Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972; tr. 1977) places Reich at the center of its discussion of the subterranean links between political authority and sexual repression. A latter-day heir to Reich was German literary critic Klaus Theweleit. His classic study, *Male Fantasies* (1978), gives Nazism a straight Reichian mass-psychology treatment and concludes that the fundamental characteristic of a Nazi was his fear of his own sexuality. Much as Reich had argued at the very dawn of the Nazi era, Theweleit asserts that Nazism's "aim is not to give free rein to...drives, but to escape them. The eruption of...drives does not produce 'satisfaction'; instead it helps stabilize... [character] armor."

REICH HAD reached the height of his European influence in 1931, but it took only a few years for everything to blow up in his face. He was tossed out of the International Psychoanalytic Association for being a communist; by that time, he and Freud were not on friendly terms—Reich ascribed this to Freud's being "very much dissatisfied genitally"—and Reich's influence in official psychoanalytic circles had dwindled to nil. In 1934 he was expelled from the German Communist Party (which Hitler had suppressed in 1933 anyway) for being a Freudian and for distracting young communists with his endless theoretical and practical discussions of sex. European politics and the challenge of making ends meet would drive him back to Vienna, then to Copenhagen, then to Malmö, Sweden, and finally, in the mid-1930s, to Oslo. To make matters worse, the authorities in his various Scandinavian homes were increasingly concerned with the morality of his therapies and the ever-present rumors that Reich was seducing his patients. (After all, Reichian therapy was conducted with the patient in underwear, involved laying on of hands, and had orgastic potency as a goal for both men and women.) Isolated from peer criticism, Reich became an outsider on every front.

In Oslo, Reich's career took a fateful turn. All of his concerns—the therapy, the politics, the social theories—would soon lead to something much larger, as well as something significantly harder for the non-Reichian world to swallow. Despite an utter lack of relevant training, Reich transformed himself into a physical scientist.

Even Myron Sharaf, Reich's generous biographer, concedes that the Reichian experimental method was problematic: "The unique features of Reich's experimental approach have never been replicated, either by Reich's own students or by traditional researchers.... Reich himself spent a good part of several years mastering the technical and clinical problems of achieving consistent results." There is also the troubling fact of "Reich's way of reporting his results in narrative style and giving selective illustrative examples rather than supplying the details of a number of subjects and complete data."

Reich's scientific work proceeded from a shaky premise—the psychological drive that Freud called libido and the physical release that accompanies orgasm were just different manifestations of the same energy. He did not mean this metaphorically: In Norway, he began conducting experiments on living human skin to measure this energy.(A young Willy Brandt served as a guinea pig in one of these experiments.) His experiments proved him right (although no non-Reichian has ever duplicated his results). Then, following his idiosyncratic logic, he began to examine dead leaves of grass under a microscope. He watched the leaves disintegrate into little bits, which he called bions. What they represented to Reich was nothing less than the spontaneous generation of life: "The bions are forms of transition from inorganic to organic matter; they can develop into organized living forms such as protozoa, cancer cells, etc. They are vesicles filled with fluid and charged with energy." These bions moved about, motivated by the same electrical energy that coursed through the orgastic human.

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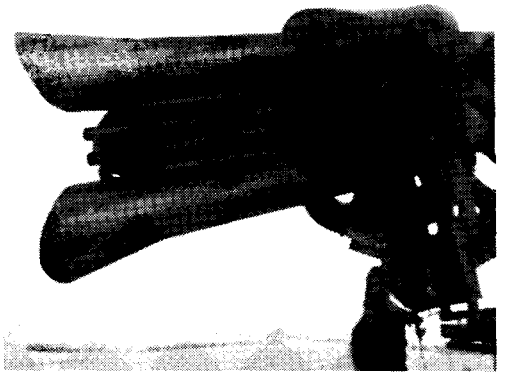
And, in one last tantalizing observation, Reich found that whichever eye he viewed the bions through would invariably become sore, evidence that the bions were emanating some form of radiation. He called this energy orgone.

In 1939 Reich secured an appointment at New York's New School for Social Research, which had become a haven for intellectuals driven out of Europe by the Nazis. His course, "Biological Aspects of Character Formation," drew students who would become his American disciples. And he continued his research, now attempting to isolate the orgone: He placed his bion samples in boxes that were made of metal, in order to contain the orgone radiation, and covered in wood, in order to insulate against external orgone interference. He noted that if he stared at the darkness in the boxes, he could see colored patches of light. (When Reich was granted an audience with Albert Einstein, the physicist was skeptical: "But I see flickering light all the time," Einstein said. "Could it not be subjective?")

Then, one dark night, Reich discovered that if he looked hard enough at the dark spaces between the stars, he could see the same light. In a characteristic leap, Reich decided that orgone must be all around. It was a "primordial cosmic energy." It was the same universal medium that physicists once believed filled empty space but whose existence had been decisively disproved by A.A. Michelson and E.W. Morley in 1887: Reich had discovered the ether. Reich laid down his new, all-encompassing orgone theory in *The Function of the Orgasm* (1942—not to be confused with his earlier book of the same title), set up a journal to publish his work, and established the Orgone Institute Research Laboratory in Orgonon (known to the post office as Rangeley), Maine.

In the early 1940s, Reich began placing patients in his metal-and-wood boxes—"orgone energy accumulators"—to improve their mental health and orgastic potency, and even combat cancer, as detailed in *The Cancer Biopathy* (1948). Boxes ranged from full-body models about the size of a phone booth to smaller models designed to accommodate specific body parts in need of treatment. Sometimes they included attachments that intensified and sprayed orgone like a removable



showerhead. There were also orgone blankets that could be folded up for easy traveling. Since the boxes (and their many variations) were relatively simple to make, they became something of a fad at various times, and many people who had no real notion of what Reichian therapy was enjoyed the supposed energizing and aphrodisiac effects of the accumulators. Hipsters, beats, and early hippies all knew about orgone boxes. And though they were eventually supplanted by other New Age panaceas (and banned by the FDA), ads for instruction manuals still appear in

The following writings by Wilhelm Reich are excerpted from the forthcoming publication, *American Odyssey: Letters and Journals, 1940–1947* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, June 1999), edited by Mary Boyd Higgins.

Letter to Albert Einstein
December 30, 1940
Dear Professor Einstein,
I would very much like to meet with you to discuss a difficult and urgent scientific matter. I work in the field of biophysics and psychosomatic research. From 1922 to 1930 I was Freud's assistant at the Polyclinic in Vienna, and I now teach experimental and clinical biopsychology at the New School for Social Research in New York.

ORGONOMETRIC DIAGRAM

Several years ago I discovered a specific, biologically effective energy which in many ways behaves differently from anything that is known about electromagnetic energy. The matter is too complicated and sounds too improbable to be explained clearly in a brief letter. I can only indicate that I have evidence that this energy, which I have called orgone, exists not only in living organisms, but also in the soil and in the atmosphere; *it is visible and can be concentrated and measured* and I am using it with some success in research on cancer therapy.

This matter is becoming too much for me for practical and financial reasons, and broad cooperation is needed. There is some reason to believe that it might be of use in the fight against the fascist plague.... At the moment, two pieces of apparatus are in the process of being patented. The matter is too crucial to expose it to the danger of being destroyed by the workings of irrationalism in the scientific community, as so often happens. It would be good and productive in every sense if I could tell you about this matter before asking you to observe the phenomena in my laboratory.

Journal Entries
Nov. 29, 1942
The sex-political possibilities in the U.S.A. are just as gigantic as the contradictions in its love life. The epitome of petty-bourgeois postures and clerical hypocrisy go hand in hand with lectures on birth control for seventeen-year-old girls at Columbia.

But this sex-pol is still in its infancy and is struggling with the basic questions of diaphragms and condoms. Legal premarital sex is entirely inconceivable although commonly practiced everywhere.

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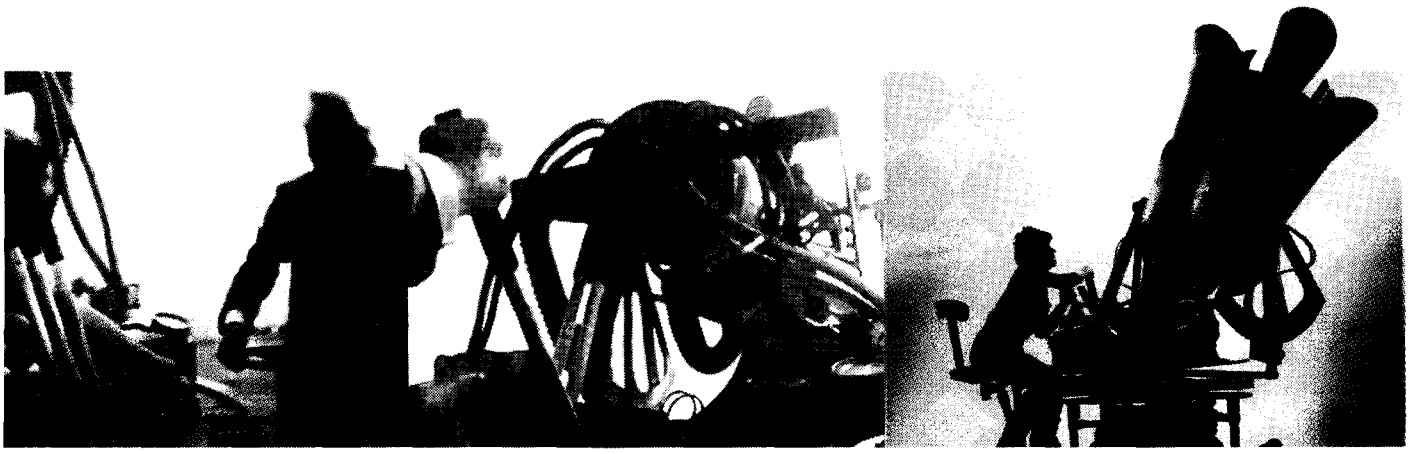


KATE BUSH'S 1986 VIDEO, *CLOUDBUSTING*, PRESENTED A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF WILHELM REICH

magazines from time to time, and there are now a dozen or so Internet sites with blueprints and how-tos.

Meanwhile, by the early 1950s, Reich was getting weirder. In 1950, he settled permanently in Rangeley, where he lived with his wife Ilse, their son, Peter, and a fluctuating cadre of true believers. Displaying an increasing dexterity with acronyms, he conducted experiments combining orgone radiation with radium (the oranur experiments: ORgone And NUclear Radiation) and determined that orgone could be used as an antidote to radiation poisoning (which was actually caused by dor: Deadly ORgone). He drew up plans for a motor that would run on orgone. He built orgone lightning rods that could trigger rainstorms. These cloud busters, like so many of Reich's experiments, only worked when conditions were just so: when there was no unforeseen dor interference, no radioactive breezes, and so on. Near the end, he observed unusual energy patterns in the sky and determined they were evidence of hostile UFOs (called EAs: Energy Alphas). He defended the oblivious human race using his cloud busters.

But amid all of the late advances in Reich's research, trouble brewed. To counter the warm reception that many left-leaning American intellectuals were giving Reich in the postwar period, a freelance writer named Mildred Brady wrote a scathing article for *The New Republic* in 1947, called "The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich," in which she accused Reich of fraud and sex-cultism. (Reich thought she had an unspoken motive for lashing out: "Brady believes that I am the only man who could help

Just as czarist oppression unleashed the "hunger" revolution in Russia, sexual hypocrisy will unleash the sexual revolution in the U.S.A.

Dec. 2, 1943
1 A.M. Took a drive through the lonely streets of the suburbs. Something unthinkably tormenting is bothering me. A young woman comes out of a cinema with her husband; suddenly she turns down a street as if she wanted to run away from him. A lonely sweet girl slowly strolls along with a heavy tread as if she wanted to be *caught up, picked up,* yearning for love: a sweet, decent human animal. A prostitute is on the look-out for her victims.

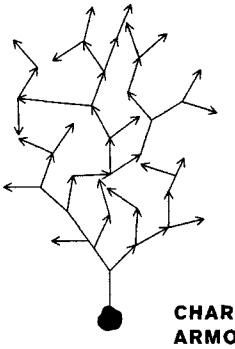
A dark street. The windows and shutters have been closed; behind them are lonely people, women waiting for their men who have gone off to war. Or women who at this very moment are being unfaithful to their absent husbands.

What misery; what nameless, silent misery!

Jan. 6, 1946
The road I have walked is long, extremely long. I began my journey through life as a young boy of only seventeen. From one province of Austria to the next, then graduation from the gymnasium, the war, medicine, natural science, love suffering, illness, marriage, a child, then another child, a profession, a career, the discovery of the orgasm, the conflict with Freud, illness, more strife, flight to Berlin, the founding of social psychology, war with the communists, conflict with the fascists, flight from Berlin, conflict with the psychoanalysts, conflict on all sides, loss of the children, loss of my high position in the International Pscyhoanalytic Association, defamation, conflict with the mechanists, conflict with the genetic psychiatrists, flight from Norway, discovery and founding of abiogenesis, then cancer, the orgone, the spinning wave, cosmic orgonometry. Too much! Too much?

Was the discovery of America, was the discovery of fire "too much"?

May 18, 1946
Very gradually and cautiously I am realizing that I understand infinitely more about the real processes of nature than the conventional physicists do.



CHARACTER ARMOR

Jan. 4, 1947
If overcoming the earth's gravity were ever to become a practical possibility, if spaceships were to fly to other planets, classical astronomy would be misleading. For the earth does not revolve around the sun but *oscillates in a relationship to the sun conforming to a natural law.* Its movement is not elliptical but follows a curved, wavy course in space. That is why a spaceship could not return according to the classical concept of space. Spaceships will have to make their calculations according to orgonometric space-time reckoning.

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her achieve an orgasm, which she so desperately needs.") The FDA was soon alerted to his activities, and it determined that the orgone energy accumulators were hoaxes that fell under its jurisdiction. This, despite Reich's well-founded protestations that he was "investigating natural phenomena" that had nothing to do with foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, or cosmetics.

The FDA, Joseph McCarthy claimed and Cold War hysterics believed, was infested with communists, and both Mildred Brady and the editorial staff at *The New Republic* were known to have left-wing sympathies. Reich, whose leftist political fervor had long since dissipated and who was now a card-carrying Republican, became convinced that "the slandering article by Miss Brady was the beginning of a chain reaction set into motion...by communist quarters." It was a conspiracy that involved *The New Republic*, the FDA, and maybe even Einstein. It was all orchestrated by Moscow's global network, which Reich dubbed Modju (combining MOcenigo, who denounced the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno to the Inquisition, with DJUgashvili, Stalin's original surname). Stalin, Reich was sure, knew that his discoveries would save the world from most—if not all—of its ills, something the Soviets could not abide. Reich wrote letters to Eisenhower and J. Edgar Hoover explaining his predicament but got no response. Reich's books now bore angry and self-righteous titles like *Listen, Little Man!* (1948) and *The Murder of Christ* (1953). For *Conspiracy: An Emotional Chain Reaction* (1954), Reich feverishly compiled evidence that Modju was using the Hig (Hoodlums In Government) to destroy him. The conspiracy, in the opinion of many Reichians, survives today, evidenced by the continued failure of Reich's ideas to gain mainstream currency, by the FDA's continuing hostility to Reichian "hoaxes," and by the continuing success of the forces of evil (environmental destruction, disease, starvation, psychological malaise, and such) over good.

On February 10, 1954, the FDA—which was never able to produce a single dissatisfied patient, let alone one who had been harmed—requested an injunction against transporting orgone boxes across state lines; Reich refused to appear in court and the injunction—which still stands today—was granted. While the FDA nosed around (sans warrant) in Orgonon, one of Reich's assistants transported an orgone energy accumulator out of Maine, in violation of the court order. When Reich again declined to appear in court, he was arrested for contempt. With uncharacteristic humility, he asserted his right only "to be wrong without being hanged for it." Acting as his own attorney, he pleaded guilty, conceding that he had indeed crossed the FDA but arguing that he had done so for the greater good of humankind.

Back in Orgonon, while Reich's family, the laboratory's staff, and Reich himself, who was awaiting sentencing, looked on, the FDA destroyed the accumulators and torched Reich's books. In May 1956, he was sentenced to two years in the federal penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Prison psychiatrists were split on Reich's mental competency. He died of a heart attack in 1957, shortly before he was to be released.

REICH DIED at the height of his mad-scientist phase, hounded by imaginary conspiracies and real-life federal agents, just when his influence in American culture was at its peak. In the 1950s Freudian ideas were all the rage, and many intellectuals—frustrated with the conformity of the society around them—were drawn to Reich's earlier psychoanalytic stances (as they were to those of another Freudian heretic, Carl Jung). Through these literati, Reich reached his broadest audience. Indeed, his work seems to be a hidden thread running through the proto-counterculture of the 1950s. Paul Goodman, the anarchist critic and novelist who would become belatedly famous in the 1960s counterculture with the publication of *Growing Up Absurd* (1960), underwent Reichian therapy and became a proponent of Reich's sociopolitical work; he cast Reich as a hero of anarcho-syndicalism and a champion of man's return to his uncorrupted natural state. William Steig, whose drawings still appear in *The New Yorker*, was a friend of Reich's and illustrated some of his works. Even the sober-minded critic Irving Howe was fascinated by Reich's quest for Marxist-Freudian rapprochement and particularly by the notion that the individual's need to repress his own sexual desire was the heart of fascism's appeal.

In the late 1940s, the short story writer Isaac Rosenfeld convinced his friend Saul Bellow to undergo Reichian therapy. For Bellow it was a schizoid experience—at once liberating and belittling, celebratory and traumatizing—and one that would inform much of his fiction in subsequent years. *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), for example, is throughout an allegory (as well as a send-up) of Reichian therapy: Dahfu, the African witch doctor, methodically strips away the defenses of Henderson, an American traveling in Africa. At the climax, as Dahfu lies dying and Henderson is bruised, beaten, defenseless (and at the mercy of a hungry

DONALD SUTHERLAND AS REICH AND KATE BUSH AS REICH'S SON, PETER, IN *CLOUDBUSTING*

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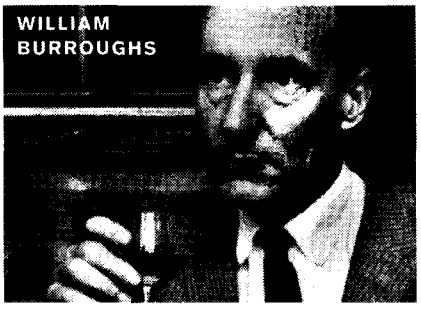

WILLIAM BURROUGHS WROTE OF AN ORGONE EXPERIMENT: "ONE DAY I GOT INTO THE BIG ACCUMULATOR... AND CAME RIGHT OFF."

African lion), Bellow makes clear the pain and risk such exposure entails, and the extreme vulnerability it leaves behind. Similarly, the novella *Seize the Day* (1956) centers on a hapless protagonist—significantly named Tommy Wilhelm—who convulsively throws off the character armor that has been his protection and his prison. He too is left weeping and broken, though truer to himself. Bellow

also wrote a play, *The Wrecker* (1954), on a similar theme, but with the violent aspects of his therapy more literally portrayed: The entire stage set is demolished by the protagonist's unpent rage. Bellow even composed an entire novel—which is unpublished, its story having been transformed into *Herzog* (1964)—about a Reichian therapist. Although Bellow's mature sensibility was formed by his experience of Reichian therapy, there's no question that he ultimately turned against it. He would later blame his therapy for the breakup of his first marriage and for his friend Rosenfeld's early death.

Norman Mailer's enthusiasm for Reich was characteristically stronger. "If I were ever to look for a therapist," he wrote in a *Village Voice* piece that was reprinted in *Advertisements for Myself*, "I would be inclined to get me to a Reichian." Mailer understood Reich's obsession with the orgasm in almost mystical terms. In what Mailer's biographer Mary Dearborn characterizes as "a total lift from Reich," the blacks and hipsters in Mailer's famous essay "The White Negro" (1957) are, by virtue of their alienation from square white society, freed from their armor, ready to experience the center of human experience: the orgasm. The hipster "seeks love...love as the search for an orgasm more apocalyptic than the one which preceded it." Then there is the novel fragment "The Time of Her Time" (1959), Mailer's purest distillation of Reich. In it, the narrator (who is described as a "phallic-narcissist," a Reichian term of art for a "self-assured, arrogant...energetic" sexual predator) forces an orgasm on an icy college student whose Reich-dabbling psychoanalyst has been unable to help her. Before returning to "love's first hole," he penetrates her in "the seat of all stubbornness, tight as a vise," and calls her a "dirty little Jew." Her character armor shattered, she proceeds to have no fewer than five orgasms—"the first big moment in her life," in the narrator's estimation.

Still, Mailer treats Reich as simply one inspiration among many. In "The White Negro," he wrote: "Energy, life, sex, force, the Yoga's prana, the Reichian's orgone, Lawrence's 'blood,' Hemingway's 'good,' the Shavian life-force; 'It'; God.... To which a cool cat might reply, 'Crazy, man!'" Mailer did pay Reich perhaps the ultimate compliment, though: in "The Hip and the Square: 1. The List" (1959), Mailer places "Wilhelm Reich as a mind" under "Hip," while placing "Wilhelm Reich as a stylist" under "Square." Mailer in the 1950s was highly susceptible to the intellectual gurus of the day. As Louis Menand recently put it in *The New York Review of Books*, he "brought Sartre and Reich together by making sex the site of existential struggle."

And then there is William Burroughs, whom Mailer himself declared "the only American novelist living today who may conceivably be possessed by genius" Like Bellow and Mailer, Burroughs built himself an orgone box, but unlike them, he made the box and the orgone central to his thinking. In 1949 he wrote to Jack Kerouac (who, like Allen Ginsberg, would submit to Reichian therapy at Burroughs's insistence) that Reich "is the only man in the analysis line who is on the beam.... The man is not crazy, he's a fucking genius." He declared that he would "not consider spending one hour of my time" in therapy with a non-Reichian. But it was Reich's science that riveted Burroughs. "What interests me," he wrote to Ginsberg, "is his factual discoveries.... My own experiments with the [orgone] accumulator have convinced me that many of his conclusions are correct." (His experiments included building a small orgone box out of a gas can, which he tested in this way: "One day I got into the big accumulator and held the little one over my joint and came right off.")

Both the novels *Junky* (1953) and *Queer* (1985) originally contained extensive discourses on Burroughs's interest

(UPPER LEFT) CORBIS/HAROLD S. CHAPMAN; (BOTTOM RIGHT) PHOTOFEST

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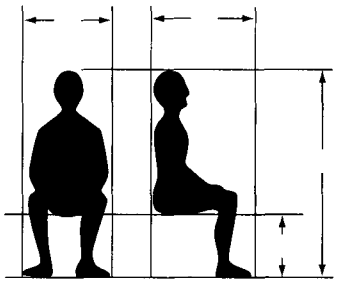
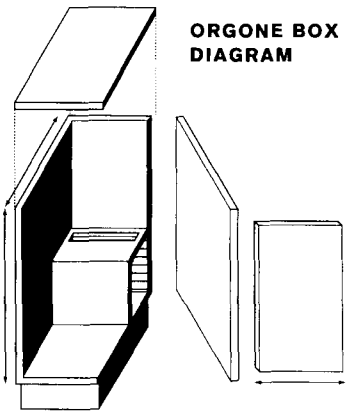
in Reich and "his orgones," but Burroughs was unable to justify their inclusion stylistically. Reich always held a prominent place in the odd cosmology of Burroughs's literary imagination, along with virus theory, Egyptian hieroglyphs, shamans, Mayan codices, the Time-Life image bank, flying saucers, and Scientology. But Burroughs was not always reverent—not that anyone would expect him to be. He did not much care about Reich the social theorist ("Reich's social and political theories...bore me"). And in a 1952 sketch for a short story based unflatteringly on Paul Bowles, he wrote:

> Like many homosexuals, Keif decided, periodically, that he wanted to be "cured" and lead a "normal life." To this end he had been analyzed by a Freudian, a member of the Washington group, a Horneyite (he chicly avoided Jungians and Adlerians), and finally by a female Reichian who attached electrodes to his penis, stuck an orgone sprayer up his ass, urging him, at the same time, to relax and let the "orgasm reflex" take over. The result was a dislocated spinal disc which required prolonged chiropractic treatment.

If the writers of the 1950s were fascinated by Reich, the actual sexual revolution of the 1960s did not necessarily proceed on Reichian premises. The overcoming of repression—which for writers like Bellow and Mailer was a desperate, dangerous struggle with internal neuroses and external conventions—was by the late 1960s a commonplace. And as the sexual revolution unfolded in American society at large, interest in its early theoretical proponents waned. The feminist and gay rights movements of the 1970s may have synthesized left-wing politics with sexual radicalism, but they did so largely without the benefit of Reich.

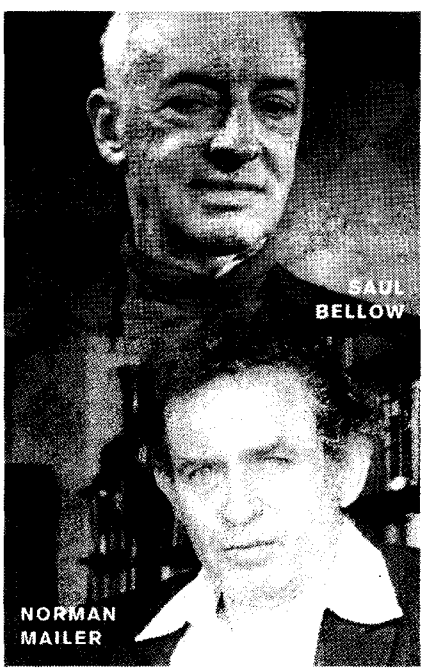
Michel Foucault, the leading theorist of sexual politics to emerge in the wake of the 1960s, was of a distinctly un-Reichian persuasion. He used Reich as an ideological foil—a thinker who, for all his daring, remained mired in conventional ways of thinking. "There was formed, around Reich," Foucault wrote in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1978), "the historico-political critique of sexual repression. The importance of this critique and its impact on reality were substantial." But after granting Reich's historical importance, Foucault is less than generous regarding his theoretical sophistication. In the Foucauldian model, revolutionary or





ORGONE BOX DIAGRAM

subversive talk about sex, no less than repressive talk about sex, only makes sex an occasion for anxiety, surveillance, and self-surveillance. "The very possibility of [the Reichian critique's] success," wrote Foucault, "was tied to the fact that it always unfolded within the deployment of sexuality, and not outside or against it." Reich had occasioned nothing more than a "tactical shift...in the great deployment of sexuality" that makes modern society a carceral nightmare. Of course, Foucault had a gift for understatement; Reich signaled the coming of a "tactical shift" that, to many people (perhaps including Foucault himself), felt like a cultural revolution.



IF THAT revolution is now history, the scientific revolution that Reich believed would be his greatest contribution has yet to take place. This is not for lack of effort or enthusiasm on the part of his followers. Given that the most extreme ideas are often the ones that attract the most devoted adherents, it should not be surprising that Reich's contemporary disciples are especially attracted to his scientific work. And given the information free-for-all that is the Internet, it should surprise no one that Reich's UFO chasing and panaceas and conspiracies and alternative physics have not quietly faded into history. Indeed, Reichiana flourishes. A group in Canada called Another Orgone Research Laboratory concentrates on Reich's scientific work with orgone itself, conducting research on interactions between orgone energy accumulators and tesla coils, observing orgone in interplanetary space, and investigating the possibility of creating an orgone vacuum. In Ashland, Oregon, "high above the stagnant atmospheric dor-layer which often affects the West Coast...with no significant sources of atomic or electromagnetic oranur in the vicinity," there is the Orgone Biophysical Research Laboratory (OBRL). Run by James DeMeo, who managed to earn both an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Reich-related scientific research, the OBRL uses cloud busters in desert-greening and drought-abatement experiments. The OBRL has also attempted to demonstrate that AIDS transmission is not related to HIV.

Each year, the lab gives out several thousand dollars to undergraduates and graduate students who are studying Reich's work. But those who plan to put Reich in his social and intellectual context should think twice before applying. Last year, a notice in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* announcing the availability of this money—the Lou Hochberg Award for students working on "the social aspects of Reich's discoveries"—caught the attention of Benjamin Kafka, a senior at Brown who had just completed an honors thesis called "Signs of Conspiracy: Wilhelm Reich and Anti-Communism in the United States." The paper is a historical consideration of Reich's final years in America, but when Kafka sent it to the judges, he discovered it was not quite what they had in mind. Indeed, the anonymous reviews Kafka received accused him of "assuming wrongly

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS (2)

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that there was no rational basis to Reich's last works...[on] cloud busting, UFO observations, orgone motor, etc.," of "trying to apply his own pro-Stalinist...positions" to Reich's story, and of "willful blindness...[to] the facts." Odd criticisms, perhaps, of a student who takes no scientific positions, whose politics intrude no further than to suggest that the Rosenberg case was "tragic," and whose research is thorough and well documented. But Kafka had written about the historical Wilhelm Reich, and the award was adjudicated by people who understood "social aspects" to mean the practical applications of Reich's cosmological theorizing. To them, Kafka had been duped by Modju. He did not win the award.

So Reich stands before us, his achievements forgotten by the mainstream and his nuttiness apotheosized by the fringe. Without him, postwar American literature and European social theory, as well as the sociopolitical movements they defined and inspired, would have been quite different. Yet while character analysis, sex-pol, and Reich's literary influence remain his most interesting and enduring legacies, the irony is that, in the end, Reich had left all three behind. The work that he did care about—the orgone, cancer biopathy, and the like—has served only to marginalize his followers and ensure that the larger world thinks of him as an oddball or a crank, when it remembers him at all. Historians may place him next to Carl Jung, Norman O. Brown, R.D. Laing, and others who tried to make psychology a basis for prophecy. In his own mind, though, Reich was something more—a latter-day Jesus, or a modern Prometheus, condemned by the gods for his theft of their power. In a document called "My Unlawful Imprisonment," composed in his cell near the end of his life, Reich declared:

> I have "done wrong" to have disclosed to mankind the cosmic primordial mass-free energy which fills the universe. This energy rules all living processes and the lawful behavior of celestial functions. It determines our emotions, our first sense of orientation, judgment, and balance. I have "done wrong" in having discovered and made accessible the basic force in nature which for millennia was called "God" in many tongues.

Hal Cohen is a freelance writer living in Brooklyn. His article "God Only Knows" appeared in the July/August 1998 issue of *LF*.

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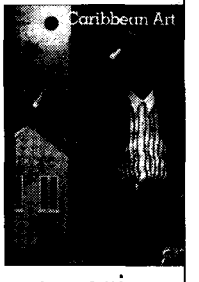
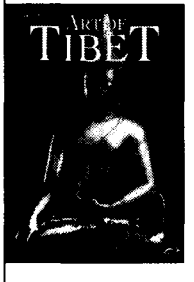


Veerle Poupeye, the Jamaica-based author of **Caribbean Art**, describes a unique combination of cultural unity and **eye-popping diversity** that makes the art of the Caribbean region so exciting. This highly accomplished art embraces work from ***"high" as well as popular culture,*** expresses various religious and political inspirations, and contends with myriad colonial and immigrant influences.



In contrast, Buddhism was proclaimed the state religion of Tibet twelve hundred years ago, and so **Art of Tibet** describes ***a more continuous and unified artistic tradition*** than the art of the Caribbean. Though **Robert Fisher** examines its Indian and Chinese influences, at the heart of the art of Tibet is the **inextricable intertwining of the art and spiritual life** of the region.

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THE SHOCK OF THE OLD

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INSIDE THE ANTI-MLA OR, IS LITERATURE ENOUGH?

BY CALEB CRAIN

In the Toronto Hilton's lower lobby, one hundred professors mill about holding plastic cups of wine. The numbers of men and women are about equal, and among the men, gray and bald pates outnumber undiminished heads of hair two to one. At a microphone, a retired professor of French literature rambles about Stéphane Mallarmé until another retired professor of French literature replaces him. Gripping a glass and a sheet of paper, the second professor explains that he will lead the group in a toast by reading the poem "Salut," which Mallarmé once read to a banquet of symbolists. "We know from journalistic reports that he had a smile on his face and that he held in his hands the text"—here he corrects himself—"no, never that, a copy of the *poem* and a glass—*un coup de champagne.*"

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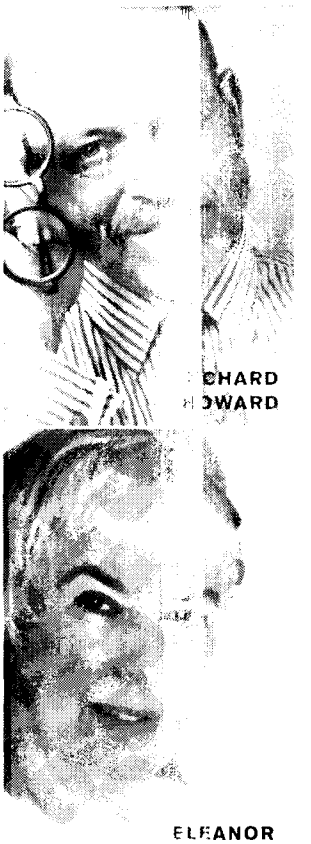
Welcome to the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics, or ALSC: quaint and erudite, with here and there a burp of antitheoretical snarliness. Though it may sound like New York City in the 1950s and harken back to Paris in 1893, the ALSC's fourth conference is taking place in Toronto in 1998. Only five years old, the association takes as its touchstone the "literary imagination" and sees itself as an alternative to the Modern Language Association (MLA), where race, gender, and class issues often take precedence over purely literary concerns.

In contrast to the MLA's annual convention, poems here are not just texts, and the wine is free. Under these influences, a thirty-year-old recent Ph.D. explains to me that he signed on with the ALSC because his field, theater history, has been overrun by "highly derivative, paranoid sub-Foucault leftovers." Almost immediately—in a move to restore equanimity that I will come to recognize as the ALSC's leitmotiv—this outburst is offset by the words of another young member, still working on his dissertation, who testifies less contentiously that he came to the conference to hear the poets Richard Howard and Geoffrey Hill. At the ALSC, spleen always yields to tact.

That doesn't mean the spleen isn't real. Cultural Marxism, anti-foundational philosophy, queer theory, and identity politics have left many literary scholars discontented. But most of those who don't like the new trends have been reluctant to make their opposition public. Unfortunately for them, quiet disinclination has failed to slow down post-structuralism or the politicization of the profession. The ALSC is a new beast: an attempt to organize literature professors who find anything programmatic distasteful. It exists to fight, and the stakes are nothing less than the definition and purpose of literary study. By temperament, however, the ALSC's members are not militants. Rather than prove their enemy wrong, most would prefer to change the subject—to something more literary. It's a style of combat that can be hard to distinguish from retreat.

The ALSC isn't very rude, perhaps because it isn't very young. In the room with us in Toronto are many respectable reasons to join the association, including Robert Alter, John Hollander, Richard Poirier, Christopher Ricks, and Roger Shattuck. These are all scholars of high stature, but they are also scholars *d'un certain âge*. Understandably, the ALSC worries about recruiting the young, which the association's summer 1998 newsletter defines as "people still in their forties or younger." Quickly running out of youngsters to interview, I start talking to Charles Harrison, a literature professor at Houston's San Jacinto College who confides that his colleagues back home tease him about the ALSC. They call it "Jurassic Park."



RICHARD HOWARD

ELEANOR COOK

AS A conference city, Toronto is a hand-me-down. Ten months earlier, it hosted the MLA. And like all hand-me-downs, Toronto makes the younger sibling look smaller by forcing a comparison. The MLA didn't visit Toronto in December 1997; it occupied it, sending an invasion force of more than 8,400 of its 30,710 members. By contrast, about 250 of the ALSC's 2,150 members are at this conference.

By another coincidence, Toronto was also once home to Northrop Frye—perhaps the only literary critic whom the MLA and the ALSC could both claim as a patron. Unhappy with the current fad for transgressing boundaries, the ALSC can point to Frye's defense of literature as something distinct from history, philosophy, or any other field. In his 1957 *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye skewered Marxist and Freudian readings of literature as "determinism, where a scholar with a special interest...expresses that interest by the rhetorical device of putting his favorite study into a causal relationship with whatever interests him less." When I ask the ALSC's 1998 president, Eleanor Cook, whether literary criticism can't help but introduce concerns alien to literature, she cites Frye. The Frye who opposed forcing any kind of "extraliterary schematism" onto literature is a hero to ALSCers, who want to restore the field's disciplinary integrity.

But Frye may also have introduced to the field some of the suspicion and jargon that the ALSC deplores. He detected sociopolitical bias in Matthew Arnold's famous "touchstones," the gem-like lines that Arnold wanted to use as a universal standard of poetic quality. "We begin to suspect," Frye wrote, "that [Arnold's] literary value-judgments are projections of social ones." Frye saw critics like Arnold, whom he called "public critics" or "men of taste," as limited. "Good taste," he explained, "...does not produce knowledge." Frye's quarrel with the technical language and disinterested approach of the New Critics then in fashion was that they were not technical or disinterested enough. He wanted to make literary criticism more like science—even, if possible, like math—and in order to legitimate that transformation, he famously asserted that "the theory of literature is as primary a humanistic and liberal pursuit as its practice."

Forty years after Frye gave it his blessing, literary theory is not so much an idea as a habit. Or, more exactly, it's an elaborate set of habits, social in nature: Theory has given the profession a new argot, new pecking-order rules, new shapes for careers, and new values. Nowadays, as the ALSC's Mark Bauerlein, a professor at Emory University, has written, theory's "critical terms are the tokens of belonging." The innovation of the ALSC is to oppose one social force with another—to give dissenters something else to belong to.

IT WAS NOT hard for literature's discontented to find one another. A network sprang up nearly spontaneously in the early 1990s, according to the ALSC's official history, which is posted on its Web site (www.lit-arts.com/ALSC). Nor was it hard to articulate grievances. John M. Ellis, then a professor of German at UC-Santa Cruz's embattled literature department, wrote the first draft of the

MARY JO BANG (TOP)

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group's manifesto in February 1993. In it, he expounded "in comprehensive detail" his dismay at the turn the MLA and the profession had taken.

The next step was made a month later, at the conference of the American Comparative Literature Association in Bloomington, Indiana. Scholars at the meeting, recalls Gerald Gillespie, a professor of German literature at Stanford, were grumbling to one another that "literary studies were caught in a suffocating, paralytic union of orthodoxies." When Gillespie and Ricardo Quinones, a Dante scholar at Claremont-McKenna College who would become the ALSC's first president, passed around Ellis's manifesto, a dozen professors joined on the spot.

Throughout the spring of 1993, Ellis, Gillespie, Quinones, and Norman Fruman, a Coleridge and Salinger scholar at the University of Minnesota, mailed the draft back and forth as they revised it. Ellis would later extend his original manifesto into a book-length jeremiad, *Literature Lost: Social Agendas and the Corruption of the Humanities* (Yale, 1997), and it is probably fair to quote Ellis's book as representative of the complaint that was the ALSC's genesis: "Many now regard social activism as the major purpose of literary criticism, and social activism of a very specific kind: the primary issue in all literary texts is the question of oppression by virtue of race, gender, and class." The ALSC began with a wish to combat political criticism. But to understand the ALSC, you have to appreciate what the group's first organizers did with Ellis's early statement.

They deleted it. In the organization's official history Fruman writes, "A breakthrough came abruptly when Ricardo Quinones decided to slash from the statement what everybody in the profession with their eyes open already knew." With a tap of the backspace key, the ALSC extended its appeal from the handful of critics willing to oppose political criticism polemically to anyone who longed for literary criticism to be a little more literary. Thus the strategic blandness of the association's name. (Its acronym is nearly impossible to remember: Just try to recite the letters in order with your eyes closed.) Nearly everyone in the group's leadership agreed with Ellis's indictment. But as a group, they chose not to talk about it.

The ALSC formula proved successful. By autumn 1994, nearly 380 people had signed and returned the ALSC's recruitment letters, which promised that the association "is not and will not be identifiable with any political position." The ALSC placed ads in *The New York Review of Books* and *PMLA* during the winter of 1994–1995; these notices invited new members with an appeal signed by poets (including David Ferry, Donald Hall, and Charles Simic) and academic stars (as diverse as Rosanna Warren, Denis Donoghue, and David S. Reynolds). By September 1995, when the association held its first conference, in Minneapolis, more than fourteen hundred members had paid the modest $25 annual dues.

In a 1994 planning session, the ALSC had opted not to compete with the MLA's monopoly on the job market. Given the strength of the MLA on that front, a challenge would probably have been unrealistic, and passing it up brings the ALSC a certain freedom. "There's no institutional compulsion for joining us," says Gillespie. "This is the joy of the elective." But it's a decision that limits the ALSC's growth and its appeal to younger members. "The MLA does nothing for me," says David W. Price, an assistant professor at Keene State College, "but I'm still a member, because you have to be connected." At the Toronto conference, there is talk of mentoring, but there are no interviews.

In every field except job placement, however, the ALSC is ambitious and busy. This spring it is launching a new journal. Under the prosaic title *Literary Imagination*, the journal will mix belles lettres and criticism—like *Raritan* but with footnotes. According to its editor, the University of Georgia's Sarah Spence, the first issue takes as its theme writing and rewriting, and will feature pieces by Robert Alter, Margaret Atwood, Marjorie Perloff, Bruce Redford, and Mark Strand. Meanwhile, the association publishes a quarterly newsletter featuring appreciations of unjustly neglected poets and moderately dour essays on topics such as "The Humanities in Decline." In addition to a Web site, the organization has an electronic mailing list (where job listings, usually not for top-tier schools, are irregularly posted), a $1,000 yearly prize for outstanding scholarship, and a brand-new executive director, Thomas F.

THE ALSC IS DIVIDED BETWEEN THE URGE TO POLEMICIZE AGAINST TODAY'S LITERARY CRITICISM AND A KINDER, GENTLER APPROACH.

HANNA K. CHARNEY

CHRISTOPHER RICKS

RICK O'QUINN/UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA (BOTTOM)

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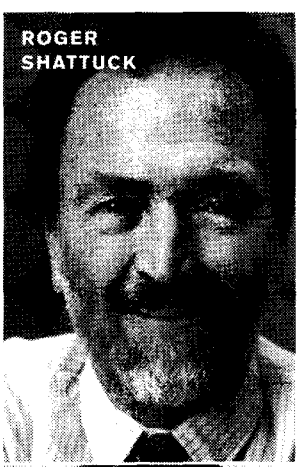
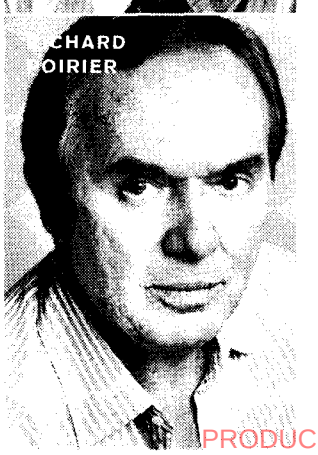
Bertonneau, who will run a new ALSC office in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

The ALSC's success has brought imitators. Inspired by news of the ALSC's Minneapolis conference, art historians Bruce Cole of Indiana University and Andrew Ladis of the University of Georgia launched the Association for Art History (AAH) in 1995. Just as the ALSC opposed the MLA, the AAH set itself against the "ruling orthodoxy" of its field's academic guild, the College Art Association. "Unsuspecting students who take art history courses," the AAH wrote in its recruitment letter, "...find themselves faced with political indoctrination."

History was next. At a press conference in April 1998, the Southern historian Eugene Genovese launched a new group, called the Historical Society, to oppose the distortion of history by "identity politics." A former communist who recently returned to the Roman Catholic Church, Genovese is a controversial figure, but his call has attracted conservatives like Gertrude Himmelfarb, liberals like Princeton's Sean Wilentz, and radicals like Harvard's John Womack. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, a history professor at Emory and Genovese's wife, told *Insight* magazine that ALSC's success had given disaffected historians "a little bit of a nudge, and a source of inspiration." And as Ellis was quick to point out in his newsletter, both Genovese and the Historical Society's former executive director, University of Pennsylvania's Marc Trachtenberg, have been dues-paying members of the ALSC.

It is too soon to pronounce on the Historical Society, which just recently found a home at Boston University. But the three-year-old Association for Art History has not managed to get off the ground. That may be because it lacks anyone as organizationally adept as John Ellis, but it may also be because it has not quite mastered the ALSC's inaugural move—the strategic erasure of the animus that started it.


ROGER SHATTUCK


CHARD OIRIER

IT'S A MOVE the ALSC is constantly replaying. At the members meeting on the second afternoon of the Toronto conference, individual ALSCers are invited to talk about the group's direction. Frank Occhiogrosso of Drew University is one of the first to approach the mike. After acknowledging that many in the ALSC "cherish the gentleness of the organization," he urges an attack on the ALSC's enemies, including the MLA and the Shakespeare Association of America, for "the way they bastardize the language." Maybe the ALSC shouldn't go for the throat, Occhiogrosso says, "but for the nose or the forehead at least."

Occhiogrosso's remarks draw laughs and applause. But at once some of the more well known scholars in the audience—CUNY's Morris Dickstein, Yale's John Hollander, UC-Berkeley's Robert Alter, and Wellesley's Margery Sabin—line up at the microphone. The day before, during a pause between sessions, Dickstein admitted to me that he had held off joining the ALSC at first. "There was a while there," he said, "when I thought that in their reaction to the MLA of the 1990s they were going to re-create the MLA of the 1950s, which was no ideal." Now, confronted with Occhiogrosso's wish to put the ALSC on the attack, Dickstein demurs. He suggests to the audience that the ALSC's role should be "not to argue or polemicize but to exemplify an alternative strategy."

Hollander seconds Dickstein, by quoting verse. "Auden says in 'In Praise of Limestone,' 'sometimes arm in arm, but never, thank God, in step,' and in order to go for the jugular, we would have to march in step, and I don't think we want to do that." Sabin is more blunt: "Hostility with the MLA is a dead end."

When Roger Shattuck called for "a measured increase in activism" during his 1996 term as ALSC president, he measured it frugally. Shattuck suggested an inquiry into freshman composition courses, a survey of publishers' decision-making procedures, and writing parodies of literary criticism. Only the first of his proposals was officially adopted, and the ALSC is now sponsoring a study of composition programs conducted by John C. Briggs, director of basic writing at UC-Riverside. Briggs sees composition as the one chance many students have to engage with literature, and he is concerned to find out whether comp instructors are allowing their students "to discover literature in the way young people always have been able to, without an elaborate superstructure of academic criticism."

HOW DO ALSCers themselves discover literature? Critics like the University of Illinois's Cary Nelson doubt they do it any differently from how members of the MLA do it. "They just take a small subset of what the MLA does and drape purple robes around it," he says.

There's some truth to Nelson's caricature: Many of the ALSC panels could have found a place under the MLA's big tent. There are other resemblances as well. Just like at MLA conventions, some speakers in Toronto exceed their time limits, show off during the question-and-answer period, or read prepared texts in a thin, cold drone. During one speaker's egregious ramble, an eminent literary critic in the audience not only paces the back of the room but goes through an elaborate workout to vent his frustration: equal parts tai chi, deep sighs, and shadowboxing.

Nonetheless, the ALSC is different. It has the cozy tyranny of a family where the MLA has the faceless tyranny of a bureaucracy. Whereas MLA panelists apply and compete for their slots, ALSC panelists usually speak by invitation. (For its 1999 conference, to be held in New York City in late October, the ALSC is for the first time publishing a call for papers.) At the MLA, there's always the worry that you're missing a better speech in the next room, but there's no such fear at the ALSC, which holds only one panel at a time, then breaks into concurrent discussion sections. The crowd is too small for anyone to get away with the MLA's bad habit of name-tag scanning for power brokers. And absent a job market, the graduate students are edgy but not panicked.

Thanks to the ALSC's top-down selection, its speakers are known quantities. I

BOSTON UNIVERSITY (TOP); COURTESY RARITAN (BOTTOM)

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enjoy seven out of thirteen talks—a much higher batting average than I have at the MLA. The trade-off is that fewer speakers are young, fewer are surprises, and the distinction between stars and admirers is more stark. The subjects here are grandly literary: Emerson, Naipaul, James, Virgil. Off-the-cuff references are to Orwell, not Foucault. Speakers are careful not to appear more knowing or more virtuous than the authors they discuss; writers here are never treated as the victims of discourse. ALSCers favor close readings, and they quote so liberally it's sometimes hard to follow the train of analysis. Classicists toss around terms like "polyptoton" and "calque" as deftly as if they had never been forgotten. The best talks are appealingly modest, as if they were being delivered not by experts but by knowledgeable fans whose aim is only to share pleasure. And in the audience, in fact, I meet real amateurs—people who never were and have no intention of ever becoming literature professors.

Some speakers do engage the P.C. post-structuralist enemy, though slyly. For example, when Richard Poirier explicates the question "Are they *my* poor?" from Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance," he talks at length about "the intimidating power accumulated in certain words like 'black' and 'poor.'" Under Emerson's covering fire, Poirier seems to be aiming at the conformism demanded by twentieth-century—as well as nineteenth-century—progressive politics.

But most speakers seem happy to dispense with politics altogether. Margaret Atwood, the Canadian novelist and poet, gives a light and frothy after-dinner speech on negotiating with the dead. She blends an interpretation of Halloween's cultural poetics, where trick-or-treaters stand in for spirit-ancestors ("Once they wanted blood; now they accept Reese's Pieces"), with a meditation on writing ("You can't make fiction without dead people") that has a ghoulish wit.

GIVEN the care the ALSC has taken to avoid the snare of political side taking, it is surprising that the association has been less cautious with an even more familiar tempter: money.

Headquartered in Milwaukee, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation devotes itself "to strengthening American democratic capitalism." Although many Bradley grants go to apolitical institutions such as the local Milwaukee symphony, the foundation is best known for sponsoring conservative causes and writers, such as Dinesh D'Souza's magazine *Crisis* and Charles Murray's research for *The Bell Curve*. Bradley was the first funder the ALSC turned to, at Ellis's suggestion. Fruman has described as "a tormenting dilemma" the decision the early organizers faced: They were uneasy about making a politically charged alliance but sure that more liberal grant makers would turn them down. In June 1994, the ALSC accepted $67,000 from the Bradley Foundation—"without strings attached," according to Fruman. To date, the Bradley Foundation has given the ALSC five grants totaling $182,000.

Does taking Bradley money politicize the ALSC? "If the Bradley Foundation were able to dictate ALSC policy, it might," Ellis responds. "But that clearly isn't the case." Moreover, he notes, the ALSC has recently sought grants from the more left-leaning Ford, Rockefeller, and MacArthur Foundations. He points out that Grace Paley, guest of honor at the ALSC's second conference, is "a noted socialist." He adds: "Does [the ALSC] apply exclusively to conservative foundations for funding? No. Does it feature only conservative writers? No. Is the membership conservative? No."

In fact, the membership is so far from conservative that when news of Bradley funding was printed in *Time* magazine in 1997, some ALSCers were upset. After Hanna K. Charney, a professor of French and comparative literature at Hunter College, read about the funding, she left the ALSC. Charney had joined because she shared the ALSC's skepticism about "the general theoretical position that everything is political." But the ALSC's conference topics struck her as "overly old-fashioned," and when friends in the sciences asked her about the association's conservative backers, "it sort of clinched it." Says Cary Nelson, "It seems to me morally appropriate that the organization accepts conservative foundation money. That's who they are."

As long as the ALSC accepts Bradley funding, critics like Nelson will say the money reveals the group's true politics. In 1998, Bradley gave the ALSC $40,000; that year, the association's annual budget was $175,000, and its assets stood at $200,000. The ALSC's membership rolls

BILL WIEGAND/UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

CARY NELSON

"IT SEEMS TO ME MORALLY APPROPRIATE THAT THE ORGANIZATION ACCEPTS CONSERVATIVE FOUNDATION MONEY," SAYS CARY NELSON. "THAT'S WHO THEY ARE."

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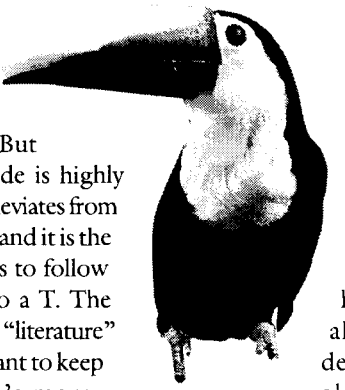
have stabilized at just over two thousand, bringing in a healthy sum each year; and in 1997, it received bequests totaling $150,000 from two German scholars, one of them a close friend of Ellis's. These numbers hardly put the ALSC in the Bradley Foundation's back pocket. They also mean that the ALSC can no longer claim that its poverty requires assistance from the Bradley Foundation. If the ALSC continues to take Bradley money, it is not least because John Ellis is a strong-willed man.

IT WAS LARGELY thanks to Ellis that the separate cells of discontent coalesced in 1993. Once he accepted an early retirement offer from the University of California in 1994, Ellis devoted himself to the ALSC almost full-time. As secretary-treasurer, he raised funds for the ALSC and edited its curmudgeonly newsletter. In Toronto, Roger Shattuck calls Ellis "our donkey, our font of wisdom, our wily strategist, and our supreme savior."

Ellis is also, Shattuck might have added, "our theorist." A scholar of German literature, Ellis began his career by writing on Schiller's aesthetics and has attempted to elaborate a theoretical defense of the autonomy of literature. "I don't like it when people oppose theory as the bad thing," Ellis tells me. "Any field, any inquiry can benefit from people sitting down and thinking about it." And so it's to Ellis that one turns with the question the ALSC's existence begs: Is there such a thing as literature for literary criticism to return to?

In his 1974 book, *The Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis,* Ellis argued that no set of criteria can determine whether or not something is literature. As is the case with many words, "literature" is better defined by considering how we use it. Ellis compared it to weeds. You might try to define a weed as a plant with thorns, or a plant that seeds easily, or a plant that grows fast. But roses have thorns, and a tomato that seeded easily and grew fast would be a gardener's prize. The only way to define a weed is practically: It's a plant you don't want in your garden.

Literature, Ellis suggested, has a similar definition. Over the years, it has been regarded as language that is highly organized, or language that deviates from the norm, or language that follows certain generic conventions. But the text of the tax code is highly organized, word salad deviates from most linguistic norms, and it is the hallmark of bad poems to follow generic conventions to a T. The only reason to call a text "literature" is if it's language you want to keep around. Or, in Ellis's more careful formulation, "literary texts are defined as those that are used by the society in such a way that the text is not taken as specifically relevant to the immediate context of its origin." In *Literature Lost,* Ellis describes society's characteristic use of literary texts as "recurrent attention."



IF LITERATURE IS LIKE A TOUCAN'S BILL, WHAT THEN ARE LITERARY CRITICS?

As Ellis concedes, our conception of literature is to a certain extent made up or, as the ALSC's academic foes might put it, socially constructed. But Ellis adds that it is not constructed by literary critics alone and that it is not fragile. He denies that there is anything especially arbitrary or plastic about a word whose definition depends on its recognition and acceptance by the people who use it. That kind of group consent, he points out, is how language usually functions. When I ask him whether the meanings of words defined by this social agreement can shift, his yes is sharply qualified. "They can shift," he explains, "but they don't shift on the whim of individuals or even of small groups of individuals."

Nor, Ellis believes, does literary taste. "You and I don't have the power to make other people read Shakespeare," he says. "The canon is a loose working agreement among large numbers of people, and it's constantly being tested.... The notion that people tailor their reading strictly according to their own class advantage is something only the campus left could believe." According to this understanding, literature is probably safe from critics who would like to jerry-rig it to produce a particular moral or political response.

The subspecies literary criticism, however, is not so rugged. And so in 1997 Ellis published *Literature Lost* to defend it from race-gender-class criticism—an unholy union, in his opinion, of multiculturalism's moral urgency and deconstruction's intellectual glamour. The candor of the book's attack caused a stir. Frank Kermode praised it as "grave and minatory" in *The Atlantic Monthly,* while the University of Illinois's Michael Bérubé denounced it as "a book that makes Rush Limbaugh look like a tweedy, soft-spoken liberal" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education.*

Ellis concentrates the core of his argument in his chapter "Power, Objectivity, and PC Logic." There he alleges that much contemporary criticism depends on two logical errors: "the fallacy of the single factor" and "the reduction of differences in kind to differences in degree." The single-factor fallacy is committed by Foucauldians, for example, who always uncover power relations as the determining structure of cultural institutions. Ellis compares their belief in the ubiquity of power to a teenager's complaint that his parents' safety-inspired rules are just attempts at control.

For an example of the second error, the confusion of differences in kind with differences in degree, Ellis points to Stanley Fish. In his book *Doing What Comes Naturally,* Fish asserts that since every legal judgment involves both principle and force, a principled judgment and an act of brute force are two shades on a single spectrum. But Ellis insists that "putting things into the same category does not make them identical." Ellis compares Fish to a "schoolboy cynic" who tries to erase the moral distinction between his choice to lounge at the beach and Mother Teresa's choice to minister to the poor of Calcutta by claiming that both, after all, are personal choices.

Although Ellis writes brusquely, many of his charges will stick. The trouble is literary critics have been prone to the

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logical errors he exposes not just out of mental sloppiness or intellectually dishonest careerism. They have been willing to make these errors because race-gender-class scholarship has a certainty of purpose that they covet. This is a problem Ellis doesn't quite solve. His definition of literature works splendidly, but he has not quite figured out what literary criticism is for.

IF MANY ALSCers are content to provide aesthetic judgments and appreciations, Ellis has something else in mind for literary criticism. In 1974, he argued that the purpose of analyzing a text is to produce "an interpretative hypothesis as to the most general principle of structure which can be abstracted from the combination of linguistic elements." This structuralism sounds a bit dated today, but when I ask Ellis what sort of work literary critics should be doing, his answer is nearly the same: "The meat of criticism is much less on evaluation than on interpretation. You don't want to read a book on Shakespeare to tell you that he's good. What you want is for it to tell you what he's really about." Like Frye, Ellis tolerates the value judgments of "men of taste," but he thinks professors should be doing something more scientific.

But do structuralist interpretations of a text go as far as a science can go? They may be more immune to quirks of individual taste than value judgments are, but they still treat the text as if it were an end in itself. A science often attempts to explain as well as describe.

In his chapter in *The Theory of Literary Criticism* on the function of literature, Ellis finessed this point in part by suggesting that literature was a thing like love or play. You experienced it as an end in itself while it served a sociobiological function of which you might be unaware. The lover does not feel that being emotionally blackmailed into future child care is the point of being in love, and the child at play does not think about improving her motor skills. The function of literature might be like these functions. We may experience *Paradise Lost* as sublime poetry, but perhaps reading it helps us reconcile our predatory instincts with our modern, herd-like life, or transmits social values to us, or develops our imaginative faculties. In Ellis's metaphor, literature might function like a toucan's bill, the beauty of

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which wows other toucans but serves uses as different as "feeding, mating, and self-protection."

But if literature is like a toucan's bill, isn't an insistence on isolating a work of literature's "principle of structure" a decision not to think about its possibly unconscious social effects? To put it another way, once a scientist has figured out that the markings on a toucan's bill serve to display the organism's vigor during sexual selection, then the scientist has no real reason to make precise, subtle descriptions of particularly beautiful toucan bills. If he were to do so, he would be thinking like a lady toucan, not like a zoologist.

By training and inclination, most literary critics do think like lady (or gentleman) toucans—toucans dressed in white lab coats, trying to disguise themselves as scientists. Faced with this impasse, ALSC member Frank Lentricchia lamented in this magazine in September 1996: "Too bad academic literary critics can't accept their amateur status—that is, their status as lovers." In many respects, the ALSC seems to have taken up Lentricchia's suggestion: When Eleanor Cook opens the Toronto conference, her presidential address names "pleasure in the great wordsmiths, delight in exercising the skills of reading" as the ALSC's prime motives. Oddly enough, a league of self-confessed amateurs is exactly what Ellis, the professional theorist, has created in the ALSC.

A LEAGUE OF SELF-CONFESSED AMATEURS IS WHAT ELLIS, THE THEORIST, HAS CREATED IN THE ALSC.

IN THE COAL mine of academia, graduate students are the canaries. The graduate students who chat with me amiably the first day of the conference are, by the third, nervously confessing, "My adviser told me not to put this on my résumé," or asking me to make sure my notes clearly indicate that they are reserving judgment about the ALSC and have not yet officially joined. All of them are fluent in theory. Heather L. Meakin of the University of Western Ontario proudly tells me she deploys the work of Luce Irigaray in her forthcoming Oxford University Press monograph, *John Donne's Articulations of the Feminine*. When I ask her why a post-Lacanian feminist would come to the ALSC, she answers, "I'm not pure." At the members meeting, Brandeis graduate student Greg Wilson encourages the ALSC leadership to promote the message "that we are not an organization designed to oppose all new trends."

It might be a hopeful sign that the graduate students are hard to read. M.H. Abrams recently predicted that "the study of writings by women and by racial, ethnic, and other groups" previously marginalized would not only survive but "mature past the stage of militant advocacy." Abrams looked forward to literary criticism's return, amended, to "the human world; that is, a world of purposive human beings communicating with each other in an environing reality." At a book display table at the conference, the University of Nebraska has placed Blanchot and

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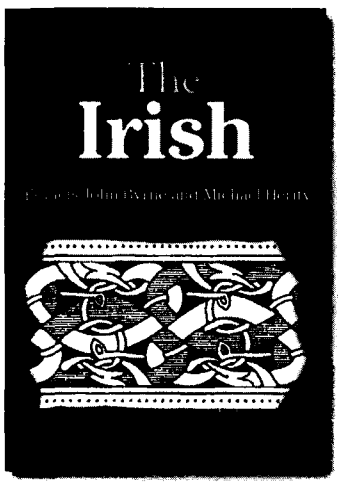

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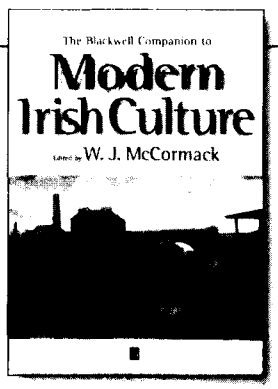

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Derrida beside Bernard de Voto. The future is unclear.

Only once during the conference am I tempted to surrender fully to it. The poet Richard Howard, with his black Philip Johnson glasses, twirling fingers, and habit of hugging men as unembraceable-looking as John Hollander, is a striking presence. Now, as Howard begins to speak about Proust, the room grows quietly alert. Howard throws his jokes away, as if he doesn't need them, wisecracking that Proust had "only one book in him, though he wrote it three times." He over-enunciates the name "Elstir, which sounds so much like the way the French pronounce Whistler," as if to make fun of the very French way that the French pronounce a word when they want to indicate that it is not a French word. Ostensibly, Howard is talking about the impression that a sonata by Vinteuil makes on Swann the first time Swann hears it, but as he drops out of his commentary about *du côté de chez Swann* and slips, instead, into reading from his own translation of the passage, I feel, unexpectedly, as if I am not just hearing Proust but communing with him:

> at a certain moment, though unable to perceive a distinct contour, to give a name to what was delighting him, suddenly enchanted, he had tried to identify the transient phrase or harmony—he couldn't say what it was—which had dilated his soul the way a certain fragrance of roses carried on the moist evening air can dilate our nostrils. Perhaps it was because he knew nothing about music that his impression was so confused, one of those impressions that nonetheless may be the only purely musical kind: momentary, entirely original, irreducible to any other.

For a few seconds, it feels as though I've been brought into a kind of union with an exquisitely refined sensibility, talking with elegant, studied vagueness about an almost purely formal art. Howard's literary criticism turns out to consist almost entirely of excerpts from Proust, but I don't want him to stop or go back. A voice in the back of my head insists, "This is cheating; this isn't criticism." But it's beautiful cheating, and it occurs to me that it's what many of the ALSC's members aspire to: They want to be Proust, describing music.

Caleb Crain has written for *The New York Times Book Review* and *Out* magazine. His article "The Bard's Fingerprints" appeared in the July/August 1998 *LF*.

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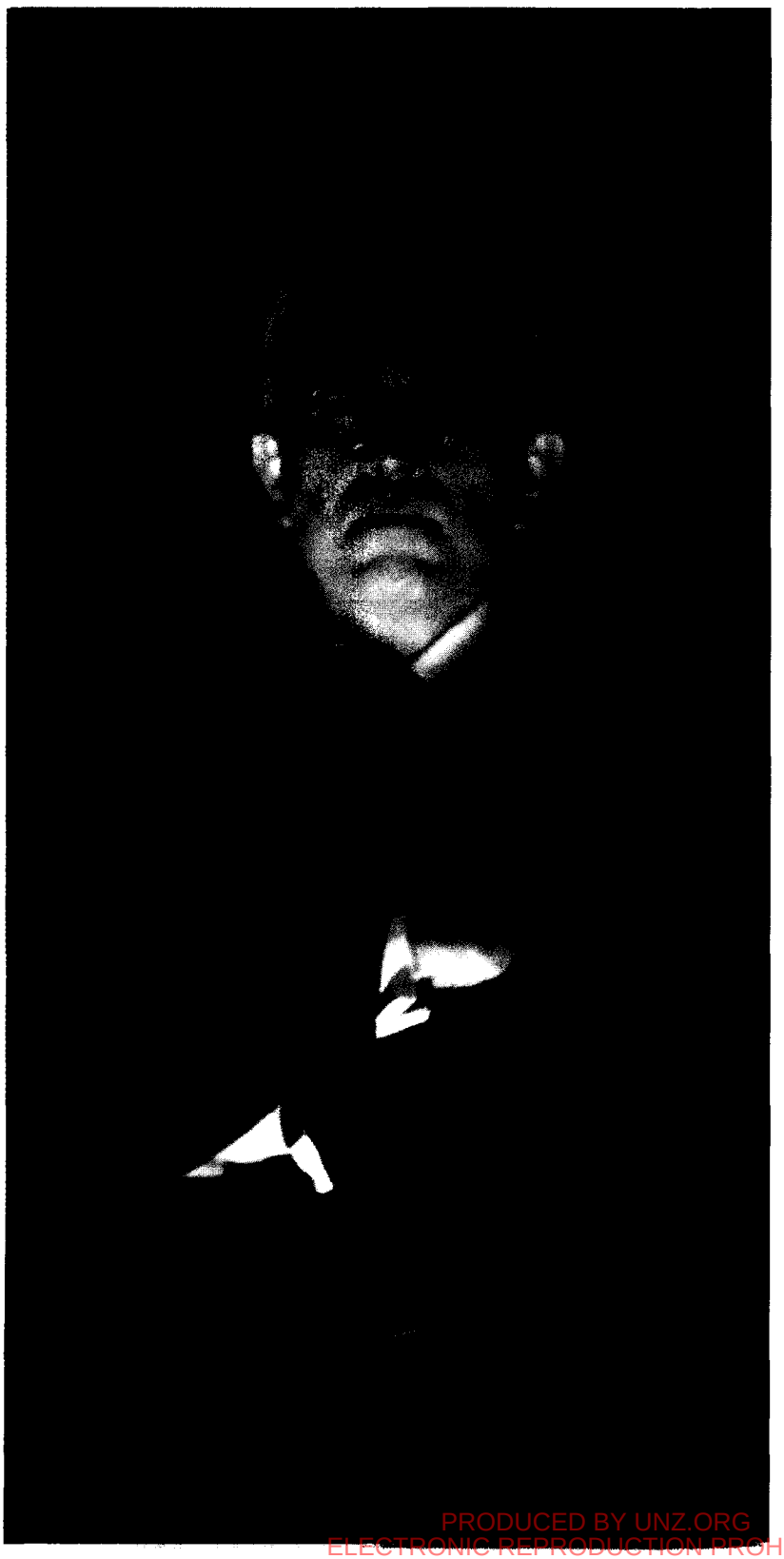

CLAUDIO EDINGER

ON JANUARY 13, BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT Fernando Henrique Cardoso stunned the world's financial markets—and his own people—when he announced the devaluation of his country's currency, the *real*. The announcement seemed to mark the precipitous end of one of Latin America's most successful economic experiments and a serious setback for one of the region's political heroes.

Cardoso, a former Marxist sociology professor and a leading theorist of Latin American underdevelopment in the 1970s, had, by the 1990s, emerged as the brightest star in a new generation of market-oriented reformers. Elected president in 1994, he introduced a new currency that curbed the inflation that had paralyzed Brazil's economy for decades. He also implemented a range of reforms that opened Brazil to unprecedented foreign trade and investment, buoying hopes that the world's eighth largest economy was on its way to becoming a twenty-first-century economic powerhouse.

Now, however, as Brazil scrambles to cope with a financial crisis that has pushed it into severe recession—and sent the value of the *real* plummeting 35 percent since mid-January—Cardoso's miracle is over and he seems certain to face renewed political challenges. One of these will likely come from Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, the rough-hewn, charismatic leader of Brazil's Workers Party, which staunchly opposes the free-market policies Cardoso has embraced. But the most provocative challenge to Cardoso may, in the end, emerge from a less expected quarter—from a man who, like Cardoso, comes from an old, politically influential family and who, like Cardoso, entered Brazilian politics in the wake of a brilliant academic career.

Roberto Mangabeira Unger may not look like the savior of the Latin American left. But the slender, bespectacled law professor has positioned himself in the midst of an accelerating debate over the future

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ROBERTO UNGER

A HARVARD LAW PROFESSOR JETTISONS HIS PAST AND SETS OUT TO DESTABILIZE LATIN AMERICA

BY **EYAL PRESS**

of politics in the region. Unger is not an economist, and it remains to be seen whether his high-powered theorizing—which combines Christian romanticism with belief in a passionate, improvisational approach to political action he calls "context-smashing"—can yield concrete solutions to the problems of capital flight, income inequality, and social instability that continue to plague Latin America. But a lot of people—including a number of rising stars on the Latin American political scene—are willing to listen to what he has to say.

HOW DID a scholar famous for both the ambition and the relentless abstraction of his theoretical projects, as well as for being one of the chief architects of the Critical Legal Studies movement in U.S. law schools, find his way into the rough-and-tumble of Brazilian politics? Unger's philosophy has been labeled many things over the years—"the most powerful social theory of the second half of the century," says the sociologist Geoffrey Hawthorn; "preposterous romanticism," scoffs the political theorist Stephen Holmes. But one thing he has not been known for, until now, is having much of an eye for the practical workings of everyday politics. "The enormous edifice of *Politics*," historian Perry Anderson has noted of Unger's central theoretical work, first published in 1987, "undeniably possesses a dreamlike quality." Indeed, Unger's sprawling magnum opus, spanning four volumes and more than a thousand pages, delves into complex debates about everything from nineteenth-century textile production to the Chinese cultural revolution, yet barely touches on contemporary issues such as poverty and unemployment. Unger's project, Anderson concludes, is largely "speculative," lying "at a visible remove from the realities of history or politics," a criticism that has been voiced frequently.

Intent on rebutting such charges, Unger, along with the Mexican political scientist Jorge Castañeda, has begun gathering an informal network of politicians and business leaders dedicated to redrawing the political map. Through this group, which he has dubbed the Latin American Alternative, Unger has been able to air his ideas before an audience of Latin American leaders from both the left and the right; and, last year, he left Harvard for São Paulo to serve as an adviser to Ciro Gomes, a former Brazilian finance minister who ran as a centrist candidate in the 1998 presidential election (which Cardoso, the currency crisis not yet upon him, won handily).

With his salt and pepper hair and his refined aristocratic manner, Unger hardly looks the part of the revolutionary. Yet Unger's politics are built around a contempt for elites and an affection for chaos. For three decades, he has been trying to turn those impulses into a radical replacement for both liberalism and Marxism. Now he wants to see his ideas implemented—and, in the process, to refashion the Latin American left in his own iconoclastic image.

IF UNGER does manage to leave his personal imprint on the region, he will be carrying on an old family tradition. Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1947 to a middle-class family of educated, urban professionals, Unger grew up in a world steeped in politics. His mother, a poet and journalist, co-edited one of Brazil's first feminist periodicals in the 1920s (her colleague on the staff, Leda Collor, was the mother of the future Brazilian president Fernando Collor de Mello). Unger's great-uncle João founded the Brazilian Socialist Party.

But the biggest influence on Unger's political development came from his grandfather Octavio Mangabeira, a former astronomer who, in 1910, delivered a famous address on Halley's Comet in a

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public square in Bahia and was duly persuaded by the state's governor to embark on a career in politics. (It was, Unger jokes, "a unique case in world history of someone coming into politics by virtue of his fascination with the stars.") Octavio became Brazil's foreign minister, but then, when Getúlio Vargas established a fascist dictatorship in the 1930s, fled the country. He returned only after World War II and went on to found the liberal opposition party, the National Democratic Union.

"He was a remarkable man," Unger told me over lunch one day at a restaurant in Washington, D.C. "When I was a child, I would visit him every summer and we would take these long walks through the streets. I remember people would come up to us and literally kiss my grandfather's hand. It gave me this sense of life played out on the grand historical stage."

However much he wished to, young Roberto felt unable to follow in his grandfather's footsteps. "My grandfather was, among other things, a brilliant orator," Unger explains. "I, as a child, stuttered very badly. I was almost completely unable to speak, which was one of the obstacles to living out my identification with him."

Still, when Unger enrolled at Harvard Law School in 1969, he did so under the assumption that he would soon be returning to Brazil to embark on a career in law and politics, not in academia. The year after he arrived in Cambridge, however, the Brazilian generals orchestrated a major military crackdown, arresting thousands of civilians, including several of Unger's closest friends and his sister, Nancy Mangabeira Unger, who won her freedom only after a group of Brazilian radicals kidnapped the Swiss ambassador in Brazil and released him in exchange for a group of political prisoners. Unger sensed he might have to extend his stay in the United States. "I was unable and unwilling to return to that," he says of his country's descent into dictatorship. "I was stranded."

And yet, if Unger sounds like a victim of circumstance, he was actually feeling more like a man of unusually good fortune. For the scholarly milieu of Harvard suited him nicely. "Despite this idea of myself as someone who would go out into the world and be a passionate man," he confesses, "I had always had a strong bent toward isolation, toward theory. I was much more interested in European philosophy and in Max Weber and Karl Marx than in political activism. Student politics, which was a big thing at the time, never attracted me.

"And as it happened," Unger adds, "I had gotten to know several members of the Harvard faculty who were very traditional in their outlook. They evidently thought they could afford to take a risk, so they invited me to start teaching classes."

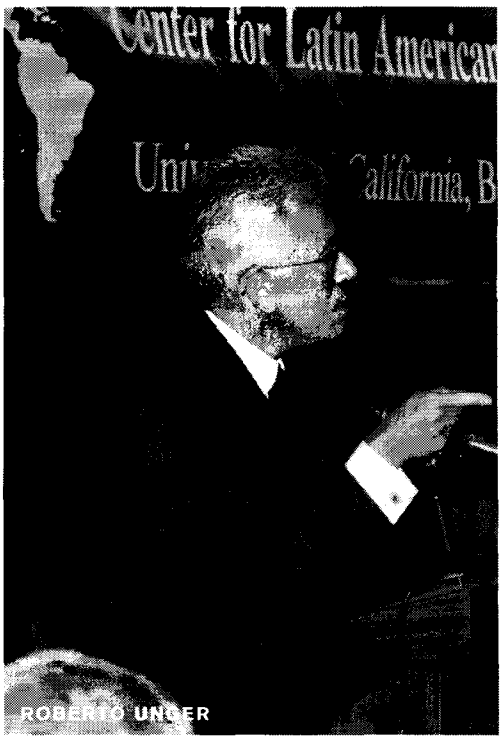
In this way, Unger developed into a striking anomaly: He was a Latin American from a distinguished political family who felt himself pulled, against his own instincts, into academe; and he was a leftist who felt not the least bit drawn to the radical politics that was exploding on the streets all around him, captivating an entire generation of students and intellectuals. While young Americans traveled to Havana for a first-hand glimpse of the revolution, and the bearded visage of Ernesto "Che" Guevara emerged as an international symbol of rebellion against the status quo, Unger retreated into the dusty stacks of Widener Library, where he buried himself in books.

YET AS HIS colleagues at Harvard Law School would soon discover, despite being decidedly out of step with the spirit of 1960s radicalism, Unger was philosophically predisposed to buck the establishment, if not as an activist then as a scholar.

In his first book, *Knowledge and Politics*, published in 1975, Unger mounted a sharp attack on liberal political philosophy, which he accused of reducing life to a series of false antinomies—rules versus values, reason versus desire. *Knowledge and Politics*, along with several subsequent works, would eventually distinguish Unger as one of the founders of Critical Legal Studies, a radical school of thought that held that the legal system in the United States rests not on neutral principles, as legal formalists claim, but on a particular set of power relations. Unger was, in effect, calling on legal scholars to make the values underpinning the rules explicit and to champion new values that could challenge the legal system's support for secure property rights and other sources of social ossification.

With the arrival at Harvard of Duncan Kennedy, Morton Horwitz, and numerous other left-leaning scholars, Critical Legal Studies mushroomed from a handful of academics into a full-fledged movement that, by the early 1980s, was attracting hundreds of adherents to annual events and conferences. A few years later, Critical Legal Studies touched off a fierce internal war at Harvard, pitting the "Crits" against a group of older, more traditional scholars.

To the traditionalists, Unger and his acolytes were nothing more than ideological upstarts peddling the latest fashionable ideas while conducting "a ritual slaying of their elders," as Robert Clark, a professor of corporate law, complained at the time. By the mid-1980s, after Paul Bator, a former U.S. deputy solicitor general and a conservative constitutional expert, left Harvard for the University of Chicago, accusing the Crits of poisoning the atmosphere at the university, the upheaval had become the subject of articles in *The New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *Time* magazine. Harvard earned the sobriquet "the Beirut of legal education," and Unger himself was attacked on the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal* and by the dean of the Duke University Law School, Paul D. Carrington, who, in an article in the *Journal of Legal Education*, branded him a "nihilist" whose disregard for legal principle suggested he should "seek a place elsewhere in the academy."



In fact, Carrington had gotten it exactly wrong. On numerous occasions, Unger has chided the postmodernists within the

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RIO DE JANEIRO, 1964

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UNGER'S POLITICS ARE BUILT AROUND A CONTEMPT FOR ELITES AND AN AFFECTION FOR CHAOS.

Critical Legal Studies movement for adopting an ideology of total skepticism. Indeed, as Richard Rorty has noted, the radical optimism and "hopefulness" underpinning Unger's work cut squarely against the grain of postmodern skepticism. Unger was raised as a Roman Catholic and, though no longer practicing, remains heavily influenced by Christianity.

In retrospect, Unger admits that the attacks in *The Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere were hurtful. "The people who opened the gates for me felt they had been betrayed," he says of his Harvard mentors. And yet, throughout the crisis, Unger maintained a low profile. He did not, for example, respond to Carrington's attack, even when reporters asked for commentary—not, he insists, out of indifference, but simply because, at the time, he was completely immersed in what had become his life obsession: the manifesto that would soon emerge as *Politics*. What was truly agonizing, says Unger, was his feeling that despite all the commotion stirred by the debate over Critical Legal Studies, when the core of his grand theoretical project was finally complete, the response was...silence.

"My entire life had been devoted to this fanatical campaign of reading and writing," Unger explains. "I had no family. I slept six hours a night. I literally lived like a monk, spending long nights reading about everything from Byzantine history to debates about slavery in the Roman republic. And then it dawned on me that all the energy I had poured into developing this radical theoretical project had produced not a murmur in the culture. People in the law schools knew my work, but in the general culture, it went entirely uncomprehended."

UNCOMPREHENDED,

maybe, but not, certainly, unnoticed. In 1987 the *Northwestern University Law Review* devoted an entire issue to Unger's work, hailing the appearance of *Politics* as "an important intellectual event." Michael J. Perry, a professor of law at Northwestern, commended Unger for producing a vast work of social theory that dared to combine law, history, politics, and philosophy within a single, sweeping narrative. In the years since, Cornel West, Perry Anderson, Richard Rorty, and numerous other prominent scholars have published detailed—and, very often, admiring—essays on Unger's project, the kind of attention that would cause many of Unger's colleagues to turn green with envy.

What gave *Politics* its unique appeal was the dual attack Unger mounted on two highly influential intellectual traditions. On the one hand, he raised a challenge to the central premise of eighteenth-century constitutionalism, which holds that, in a democracy, certain institutional arrangements, along with certain rights and privileges (such as private property), should be safeguarded from dramatic intrusions. Routine politics, in this view, should deal with narrow issues, while more fundamental questions are reserved for periods of crisis. Unger argues that this Madisonian philosophy, which undergirds the American system of checks and balances, has the effect not of enhancing democracy but of turning politics into a mundane contest for small advantages within moribund institutions. A good society, Unger counters in *Politics*, should obliterate the distinction between routine and revolutionary politics and put "everything...up for grabs," even basic institutional arrangements. (A version of this philosophy was perhaps anticipated by Thomas Jefferson, who viewed revolution as the birthright of each new generation.)

Unger's argument was not without its eccentric sides: He proposed, for example, that a special "destabilization" branch of government be formed to smash apart entrenched hierarchies and even argued that citizens be endowed with "destabilization rights." If, for instance, a number of private enterprises succeeded in destroying their competitors and hiring workers only for temporary, low-paying jobs—common enough, as many Americans can attest—Unger's destabilization branch would "order the enterprises in question to moderate their internal hierarchy and relinquish some of the devices by which they exclude new workers," regardless of whether the corporation's behavior had been within the law.

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To some, Unger's romanticization of instability, as well as his apparent indifference to the rule of law, were disquieting. In a scathing 1987 essay in *The New Republic*, published under the title "The Professor of Smashing," the political theorist Stephen Holmes argued that Unger's buoyant call for citizens to engage in context-smashing could as easily foster tyranny and injustice as freedom and democracy. The legal scholar Cass Sunstein, in his contribution to the Northwestern symposium, echoed this point. And yet, as Sunstein conceded, even if one viewed context-smashing as potentially dangerous, *Politics* could still be appreciated as a bold attempt to respond to concerns about the constriction of human possibilities in advanced societies dominated by large corporations and bureaucracies.

In addition to taking on the main traditions of Anglo-American liberalism, Unger used *Politics* to advance a powerful critique of Marxism. The determinism built into Marx's philosophy of history, he argued, thwarted its transformative aspirations. The point was familiar, but more novel was Unger's critique of Marxism on economic grounds. According to Unger, the notion that equality can best be achieved through state control of the means of production—or, in social democratic conceptions, vigorous state regulation of economic activity—should be discarded. Instead of concentrating undemocratic power in the hands of the state, he argued, leftists should promote the gradual formation of small-scale, decentralized institutions within the market. Unger has suggested, for example, a national network of alternative lending institutions that could democratize access to credit and production while dispersing power. If this meant letting free-market institutions work for the benefit of the disadvantaged, so be it.

In another break with Marxism, Unger wrote rhapsodically about the emotions. Invoking a "gospel of plasticity," Unger called on citizens to "raise a storm" against all forms of rank and hierarchy, to "turn subversion into a way of life" by pursuing "unfulfilled longings" in all realms of experience, from the workplace (where individuals should engage in "role jumbling") to the personal arena (where social conventions should not constrain expressions of passionate love). In a passage deleted from the final text, Unger recommended for social life "what the Marquis de Sade recommended for sex: the strenuous enlargement of enacted possibilities." Unger, Holmes concluded, "hopes to do for the daylight what Sade did for the night."

Here, then, was a work of radical social theory that pointedly departed from some of the core tenets espoused by leftists throughout the world. Unfortunately, *Politics* had little chance of emerging as a successor to the *Communist Manifesto*. And even his admirers recognized this. "Unger pays little attention to the burning cultural and political issues in the everyday lives of ordinary people," wrote Cornel West in his book *The American Evasion of Philosophy*. "Unger invokes a politics of personal relations and everyday life, yet he remains rather vague regarding its content."

IF ACADEMIC writing can't change the world, Unger hopes that political punditry can. Last year he began writing a regular column in *Folha de São Paulo* (one of Brazil's largest daily newspapers), appearing frequently on television, and writing articles on current events for a host of popular magazines. He also has come forward with a new book, *The Future of American Progressivism* (Beacon), that is co-written with none

other than Cornel West. When I first met Unger, he had flown to Washington, D.C., from Brazil to appear with West at a series of speaking engagements to publicize the book and was, he frankly conceded, banking on West's celebrity to boost sales and readership.

In fact, Unger has reached outside the academy in the past. In 1979, when the military dictatorship began to loosen its hold on Brazil, he traveled to São Paulo and drafted the founding manifesto of the newly formed Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB)—a party with which Cardoso was also briefly associated. A few years later, Unger returned to Brazil to direct a foundation that assisted needy children in the country's burgeoning urban slums (the infamous favelas) and even ran an eight-week lightning campaign for a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, which he lost by a narrow margin.

"It was kind of absurd," says Unger, laughing at the memory. "I had no money, no staff, and I would go into these slums, alone, to hand out pamphlets, often to the local drug pushers." Unger was, quite literally, taking a page out of his philosophy: In a 1984 book, *Passion: An Essay on Personality*, Unger championed the Christian-romantic notion that, for individuals, the highest form of redemption comes through feats of self-transformation and "social iconoclasm"—acts in which the individual experiences "the primacy of personal

(LEFT) AGENCIA ESTADO PHOTO BANK INTERNATIONAL; (TOP) AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS; (BOTTOM) CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES/UC-BERKELEY

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JORGE CASTANEDA

CORBIS/SERGIO DORANTES

UNGER AND CASTANEDA ARE COURTING MAVERICK LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL FIGURES FROM BOTH THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT.

encounter and of love" by bonding with people outside his immediate social sphere. Context-smashing, in other words, should be carried out not only in the political arena but in each individual's personal and professional life.

Might Unger be planning another run for political office? At the very least, his latest foray into Latin American politics seems to represent something far more serious than any of his previous excursions. "I was in the characteristic situation of arriving at middle age," he says of his decision to leave Harvard, "and feeling increasingly constrained by the limitations of the garden in which I lived. My transition to the seething cauldron of Brazil puts me in a situation where I'm not in control, where all the time I experience a full range of emotions—disappointment, humiliation, ridicule, setback. In my view, this is necessary, this is life, and it produces a burst of energy, the possibility of self-transformation."

THUS FAR, the main vehicle for this transformation has been the Latin American Alternative, which Unger hopes will lay the groundwork for a break with the status quo. For several years now, a chorus of critics has denounced neoliberalism as the latest form of Western imperialism: a set of policy prescriptions that have been forced on the region by Washington-based institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and are designed to placate foreign investors at the expense of workers, consumers, and the poor. (Interestingly, with the world's financial crisis, attacks on the IMF's austerity policies have begun appearing in publications like *Business Week*, and are even

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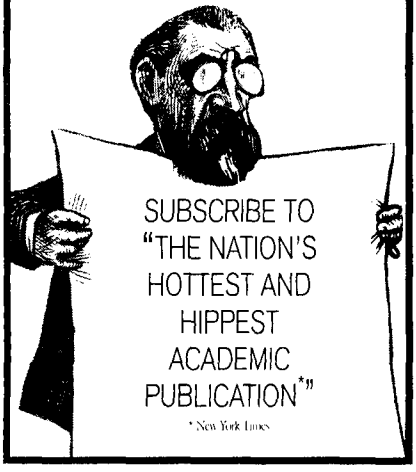

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voiced by Joseph Stiglitz, the current head of the World Bank.)

What inspired Unger and Castañeda to launch the Latin American Alternative, however, was a shared belief that the left, while correct in its criticisms of neoliberalism, remains stuck in old habits of thinking. In a new document, *After Neoliberalism: A New Path*, they acknowledge that "the market must be the principal designator of resources." Free trade and privatization, they argue, are not necessarily bad things—as long as they are accompanied by far-reaching reforms. Unger and Castañeda propose guaranteeing every citizen a "social right" to schooling and a job; breaking up media oligopolies; and holding town meetings to help citizens supervise municipal spending. Although Unger and Castañeda agree with others on the left who insist that the state must preserve a social safety net, they argue that money should be raised not through progressive taxes on income (which the rich in Latin America have long been adept at avoiding) but through a value-added tax on consumption; this tax may increase the cost of living for some poor people, but it has the advantage of forcing the rich to actually pay it.

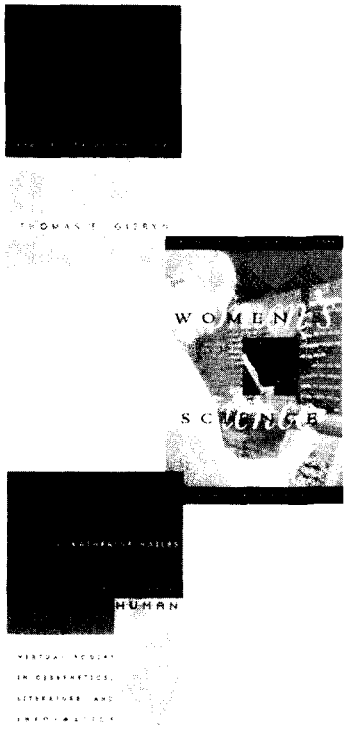
There is, of course, a significant irony in all of this. Unger, the theorist whose work has often been dismissed as blithely indifferent to political realities—and overly apocalyptic in its radicalism—appears to be moving in a decidedly more pragmatic, and even centrist, direction. "The first thing one notices about this document," wrote Marc Falcoff, a resident scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, in a review of Unger and Castañeda's founding manifesto, "is its conservatism compared with manifestos of the Latin American Left—even the moderate Left—as recently as twenty years ago.... [P]rivate property...is embraced as an ideal. National saving is seen as the key to economic development, and privatization is accepted as a (sometimes) useful tool, as is market economics in general." *The Economist* has praised Unger and Castañeda for "pragmatically supporting privatization and free trade." Is Unger's romantic vision, once translated into concrete proposals, really all that different from the free

REUTERS/JORGE NUNEZ/ARCHIVE PHOTOS

market with a human face espoused by Bill Clinton, Tony Blair—and Unger's own doppelgänger, Henrique Cardoso, a man he describes as "the opposite of everything I like"?

In part, the confusion lies in the fact that Unger has always opposed the idea of laying out a detailed blueprint for what society should look like. His philosophy is, after all, predicated on the notion that everything should constantly be changing, and his latest manifesto concludes with calls for injecting "a blast of liberty" into

PERSPECTIVES ON SCIENCE



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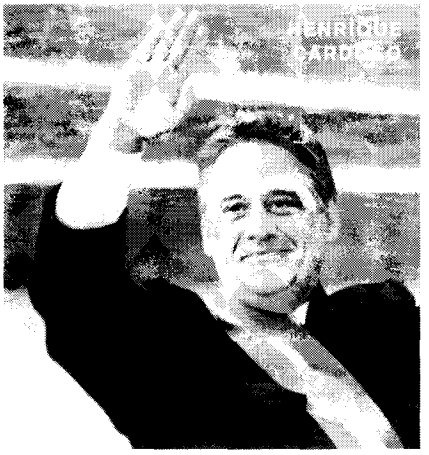

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

IS UNGER'S ROMANTIC VISION, ONCE TRANSLATED INTO CONCRETE PROPOSALS, REALLY ALL THAT DIFFERENT FROM THE FREE MARKET WITH A HUMAN FACE ESPOUSED BY HIS NEMESIS, HENRIQUE CARDOSO?

Latin American politics, a series of "shock waves" that will permanently rattle the established order. Another source of confusion stems from his unconventional view of who the agents of social transformation will be. Last December, at a Latin American Alternative meeting in Berkeley, California, Unger lashed out at the icons of the leftist opposition in Latin America—Mexico City mayor Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and the Brazilian Workers Party's Lula. These leaders, Unger charged, are more interested in "defending the vested rights of organized workers" in the "relatively privileged" sectors of the economy than in addressing the needs of the "unorganized majority." Unger went on to declare that the best hope lies with "political mavericks" who possess the daring and imagination to advance bold new ideas—politicians like Ciro Gomes in Brazil and Vicente Fox in Mexico, both of whom have been attending the meetings of the Latin American Alternative, and neither of whom remotely fits the conventional image of a leftist.

Indeed, Fox, the tall, strapping governor of the Mexican state of Guanajuato, is a former Coca-Cola executive and the likely future presidential candidate of the PAN, Mexico's pro-business, conservative party. Gomes, the former finance minister, holds orthodox views on matters such as fiscal discipline and privatizing state industries, both of which he favors. Strolling through the Berkeley campus after the conference, I asked Unger if he seriously believed these men could serve as catalysts for drastic social change.

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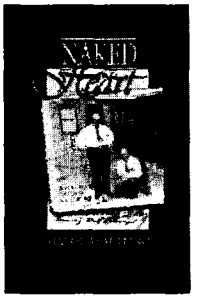

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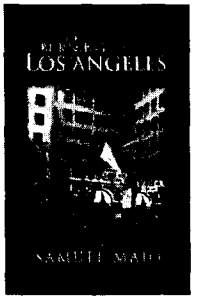

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"I'VE REACHED THE LIMITS OF MY WORK AS AN INTELLECTUAL AGITATOR," UNGER SAYS. "MY NEXT GOAL IS TO CONNECT MYSELF TO SOME LARGER SOCIAL MOVEMENT."

"Absolutely," he replied. "Ciro and Vicente are both temperamentally much more capable of radicalism in political action, radicalism in the sense of taking big risks, than, say, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas or Lula." As we continued walking, Unger turned to me and said, "Look, knowing these characters, there's no question who would be more likely to knife the Mexican plutocracy in the back. Fox or Cardenas? The answer is Fox. And the same is true of Gomes over Lula."

In one sense, Unger's choice of allies is not the least bit surprising. His view of politics has, after all, always stressed the importance of the individual over the group and of experimentation over ideology. And both Fox and Gomes, despite their party affiliations, have distinguished themselves as innovators willing to try the unexpected: Fox by establishing lending institutions for the poorer inhabitants of the Mexican state he governs; Gomes by launching a highly successful campaign to combat infant mortality in the impoverished Brazilian state of Ceará, where he formerly served as governor.

Still, for all of this, one has to wonder why Unger views these men as context-smashers when, in many ways, they are as traditional as some of the leftist politicians he loathes. "Unger has this belief that these independent candidates, some of them with conservative parties, will be the vehicle for a progressive agenda," says Harley Shaiken, director of Berkeley's Center on Latin American Studies, which hosted the conference in December. "That's one thing they most certainly are not. I think he's taking parts of individuals he likes and extrapolating far too much from that." Certainly in Latin America, of all places, viewing politics through the prism of personality is potentially dangerous: The region has, after all, seen its share of

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charismatic individuals (Juan Perón, Alberto Fujimori) who have used their charm to build up personality cults.

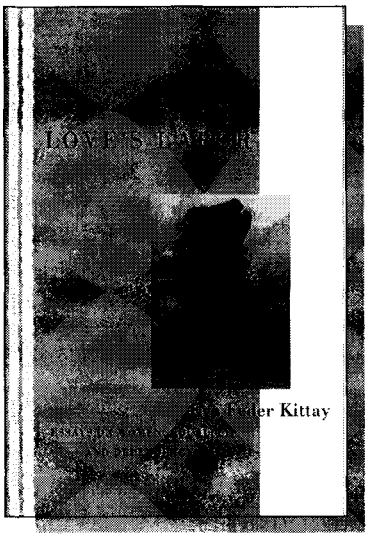
THEN AGAIN, Unger does seem to recognize that, in the long term, it will take more than a few maverick leaders—much more—to shake up the Latin American political system. "My next goal is to connect myself to some larger social movement," he says hopefully. "I have an ally in the person of the current financial crisis, but I feel that I've reached the limits of my work as an intellectual agitator. This work represented an advance for me, but I still feel like I'm wearing white gloves, that I'm separate from the action. For me, the next step will be to find out who my allies are, form a group, and eventually associate this group with a party."

Before doing so, however, Unger, at least for a moment, is slipping the white gloves back on and taking a temporary breather. This semester he's spending his time not on the streets of São Paulo but as a visiting scholar at Yale University. Evidently, the appeal of the academic life has not entirely faded.

Unger does, however, plan to continue making a stir while in New Haven. Indeed, his ultimate dream, he says, is for the work he has been doing in Brazil to reverberate in the United States, which, in his view, is equally in need of a fresh alternative to the status quo. To this end, he has been meeting with editors at *The New York Times* and elsewhere and giving copies of his latest books to any politician he happens to cross paths with. At Berkeley this past December, Unger bumped into David Bonior—the influential Democratic representative from Michigan—in the hallway of his hotel. Earlier in the day, Unger had delivered a fiery speech denouncing progressives for lacking the courage to experiment with bold new ideas. Now, however, he struck a more conciliatory tone. Handing two copies of each of his most recent books to the congressman, he told Bonior he hoped he would enjoy reading them.

"And could you," he added, "pass along these extra copies to Mr. Gore for me?"

Eyal Press is a contributing editor of *LF*. His article "The Archive Eaters" appeared in the April 1998 issue of *LF*.



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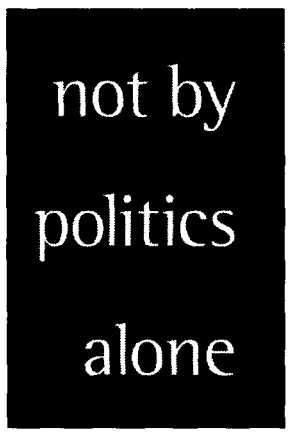

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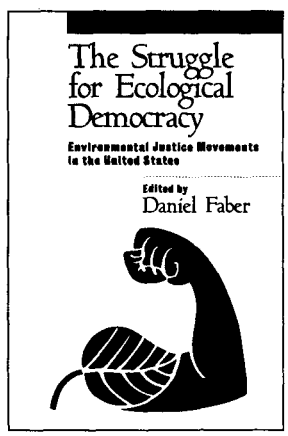

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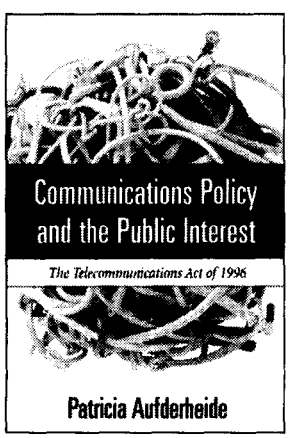

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MY FIRST INTELLECTUAL

AN EX-JOCK REMEMBERS THE TEACHER WHO CHANGED HIS LIFE

BY **MARK EDMUNDSON**

DOUG MEYERS CAME TO MEDFORD HIGH School with big plans for his philosophy course. Together with a group of self-selected seniors, he was going to ponder the eternal questions: beauty, truth, free will, fate, that sort of thing. The class would start out reading *The Story of Philosophy*, by Will Durant, then go on to Plato's dialogues, some Aristotle, Leibniz (a particular favorite of Meyers's), maybe just a little bit of Kant, then into a discussion of Bertrand Russell's effort to clear the whole thing up with an injection of clean scientific logic. Meyers had just graduated from Harvard. All of his intellectual aspirations were intact.

On the first day of class, we saw a short, slight man, with olive skin—we thought he might be Mexican—wearing a skinny tie and a moth-eaten legacy suit with a paper clip fastened to the left lapel. On his feet were Ivy League gunboat shoes, lace-ups designed in homage to the *Monitor* and the *Merrimack*. He had hunched shoulders, a droopy black mustache, and Valentino-type eyes, deep brown, sensuous, and penitential. Even when he strove for some dynamism, as he did that first day, explaining his plans for the course, he still had a melancholy Castilian presence, the air of an instinctively comprehending reader of *Don Quixote*.

Having outlined the course, he turned away from us and began writing on the blackboard, in a script neater than any we would see from him again. It was a quotation from Nietzsche. He told us to get out our papers and pens and spend a couple of pages interpreting the quote "as a limbering-up exercise." I had never heard of Nietzsche. I had never read all the way through a book that was written for adults and that was not concerned exclusively with football.

The day before, I'd sat in the office of Mrs. Olmstead, the senior guidance counselor, whose perfume conjured up the sound of Mantovani's string section, sentimental, lush, and all-conquering, and been informed that I ranked 270th in a class of nearly 700. My prospects were not bright. We talked about Massachusetts Bay Community College, Salem State Teachers College; we discussed my working for the city of Medford—perhaps I'd start by collecting barrels, then graduate in time to a desk job (my father had some modest connections); I mentioned joining the Marines (I might have made it in time for the Cambodia invasion). Nothing was resolved.

As I was mumbling my way out the door, Mrs. Olmstead began talking about a new teacher who was coming to the school, "someone we're especially proud to have." He was scheduled to teach philosophy. I didn't know what philosophy was, but I associated it with airy speculation, empty nothing; it seemed an agreeable enough way of wasting time.

So there I was in a well-lit top-floor room, wearing, no doubt, some sharp back-to-school ensemble, pegged pants and sporty dice-in-the-back-alley shoes, mildly aching from two or three football-inflicted wounds, and pondering the Nietzsche quotation, which I could barely understand. I felt dumb as rock, a sentiment with which I, at seventeen, had no little prior experience. But by putting the quotation on the board, Meyers showed me that in at least one department his powers of comprehension were a few notches lower than mine. He had misunderstood Medford High School entirely.

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The appearances had taken him in. No doubt he'd strolled through the building on the day before students arrived; he'd seen desks, chalkboards, large windows that slid up and open with a cheering metallic gurgle, supply closets stocked full of paper and books, all the paraphernalia of education. He had seen these things and he'd believed that he was in a school, a place where people quested, by their lights and by fits and starts, for the truth, its elaborations and its antitheses.

But I had acquired a few facts that Meyers would not have been primed to receive at Harvard, or at prep school, or at any of the other places where he had filled his hours. Medford High School, whatever its appearances, was not a school. It was a place where you learned to do—or were punished for failing in—a variety of exercises. The content of these exercises mattered not at all. What mattered was form, repetition and form. You filled in the blanks, conjugated, declined, diagrammed, defined, outlined, summarized, recapitulated, positioned, graphed. It did not matter what: English, geometry, biology, history, all were the same. The process treated your mind as though it were a body part capable of learning a number of protocols, simple choreographies, then repeating, repeating.

Our bodies themselves were well monitored. When the bell rang, we rose and filed into the corridor, stayed in line, spoke quietly if at all, entered the next class, were ordered to sit down, sit quietly, feet beneath the desk, all day long presided over by teachers, a significant fraction of whom were going, at greater or less velocities, ending sometimes with a bang, sometimes with subdued, heart-emptying sobs, out of their minds. At least two that I can remember had been mastered by a peculiar form of speech: You couldn't say that they were talking to themselves, but they were clearly not addressing anyone on the outside, either. Poetry, Mill famously said, is not heard but overheard. This was overheard, but no way close to poetry. This was the way souls in purgatory mutter and carry on. When these teachers were overwhelmed—it wasn't hard to do: We stole Miss McDougle's rank book; we locked her once, briefly, in the supply closet—they called for a sub-master, Sal Todaro, or, more feared, Dan O'Mara, Dandy Dan, to restore order. The place was a shabby Gothic cathedral consecrated to Order, and maybe it was not without its mercies. If you'd done what you should have at Medford High, the transition into a factory, into an office, into the Marines would be something you'd barely notice; it would be painless, sheer grease.

BEFORE Meyers arrived, I never rebelled against the place, at least not openly. I didn't in part because I believed that Medford High was the only game there was. The factories where my father and uncles worked were extensions of the high school; the TV shows we watched were manufactured to fit the tastes for escape that such places form; the books we were assigned to read in class, *Ivanhoe, Silas Marner, The Good Earth,* of which I ingested about fifty pages each, could, as I saw it then (I've never had the wherewithal to check back into them), have been written by the English teachers, with their bland, babbling goodness and suppressed hysterias. Small bursts of light came through in the Beethoven symphonies my father occasionally played at volume on our ancient stereo (the music sounded like it was coming in over a walkie-talkie) and the Motown tunes I heard on Boston's black radio station, WILD, but these sounds were not connected to any place or human possibility I knew about. So I checked out. I went low to the ground, despondent, suspicious, asleep in the outer self, barely conscious within.

This condition Doug Meyers changed. That now, however imperfectly, I can say what's on my mind, and that I know what kind of life I hope for, I owe not to him alone, of course, but to many. Doug Meyers pushed open the door to those others, though, other worlds, other minds. And pretty much on his own, Meyers taught me how to teach. I'm not sure if I've ever heard his sort of approach described before, but I think it's as good now as it was when I first encountered him almost thirty years ago.

For three months, Meyers did his best with Will Durant and *The Story of Philosophy.* We barely gave him an inch. Gubby Shea (Kevin Shea on his report cards and disciplinary citations) made enormous daisy chains out of the elastics he used to bind the advertising circulars he delivered in Jamaica Plain and Mattapan on Saturday mornings or sat, his body tight with concentrated energy, inking in all of the *o*'s in the textbook, a brilliant, futile parody of life at Medford High. Jeff Stanwick pried tufts of grass off the soles of his soccer cleats; Michael de Leo and John Aquino, wide receiver and quarterback for the Medford Mustangs (I blocked for them, sporadically), contemplated pass plays and the oncoming game with Newton, or Somerville, or Everett. Carla Masse was high-school beautiful. Susan Rosenberg, the school's only hippie—she wore wire-rim glasses and work boots and was of no social consequence at all—conversed with Meyers on subjects no one else cared about. She and Joseph Jones were about the only ones with anything to say.

Joseph was a hater. He hated communism, hated drugs, hated women's lib (as it was then called), hated Susan, hated Meyers. He was stumpy and strong as a boss troll, with acne on his face so livid it looked like someone had sprayed it on that morning. He wore Sears, Roebuck short-sleeve, stain-holding shirts that reeked of the night shift. Joseph called himself conservative, but he was only that because he hadn't yet encountered a recruiter from a Brownshirt operation.

MEYERS wrote him off from the start. He didn't try to convert Joseph, or to understand his painful home life, or to contact his suppressed inner self. By indulging Joseph a little, putting his blather into cogent form for him and us, Meyers might have "gotten a good discussion going"—every teacher's dream. Instead, Meyers talked with serene intelligence to Susan and anyone else who cared to volunteer and treated Joseph with subtle, and occasionally not so subtle, derision.

For Meyers thought well of himself. He wouldn't pander. And we all wondered, if unspokenly, where this guy might have gotten his considerable lode of self-esteem. Teachers, as we could have told him, were losers out-and-out. And this one in particular wasn't strong or tough or worldly. He wore ridiculous clothes, old formal suits and that weird paper clip in his lapel; he talked like a dictionary; his accent was over-cultivated, queer, absurd. He was a compendium of odd mannerisms, starting with the way he swung his right hand from the wrist laterally as he spoke. Yet he thought highly of himself. And not much at all, it wasn't

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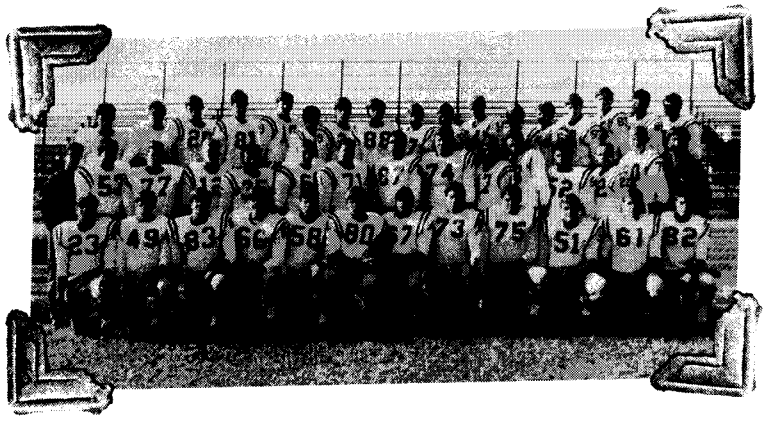
difficult to see, of us. Except for Susan, whom he addressed in affectionate tones, Meyers spoke to the class with perpetual irony. He mocked us, and not always so genially, for never doing the reading, never knowing the answer, never having a thought in our heads. We were minor fools, his tone implied, for ignoring this chance to learn a little something before being fed live and whole to what was waiting. For our part, we sat back, let him wrangle with Joseph, and waited to see what would turn up.

ONE DAY IN mid-December or so, Meyers walked in and told us to pass back our copies of *The Story of Philosophy*. Then he told us that he had some other books for us to read but that we'd have to pay for them ourselves. (Gubby Shea piped up immediately to say that this was fine with him, since he'd finished with the Durant, finished inking in the *o*'s.) Meyers, it turned out, had asked no one's permission to do this; it just struck him as a good idea to try to get people who never picked up a book to do some reading by giving them work that might speak to their experience. At Medford High, this qualified as major educational innovation, real breakthrough thinking. And of course there were plenty of rules against using books that hadn't been approved by the school board, weren't purchased through public funding, and so on.



The books that Meyers picked were on a theme, though I had no idea of that at the time. *The Stranger, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Siddhartha*: The first three were about the oppressions of conformity (among other things), the last about the Buddha's serene, fierce rebellion against it. We were all weighed down by conformity, Meyers knew. And he also knew that we, his self-selected seniors, were oppressors in our own rights, passing on the ways of the system to the weaker, homelier, duller kids. These were revelations that emerged slowly for us as we talked not just about the high school and its day-to-day machinations but also about sports, sororities, circles of friends and family and what they closed out. We learned to use some unfamiliar language to talk about ourselves, and so became, for a few moments at a time, strangers in our own lives, the subjects of new kinds of understanding and judgment.

I don't want to idealize this process. For the first few weeks, since virtually no one but Susan would read a book at home, we simply sat in a circle and read the pages aloud in turn. Periodically, Meyers would ask a question, and usually, in the beginning, it was he that would answer it or decide finally to let it drop. One day, when we were reading *The Stranger,* Meyers asked us about solitude. What does it mean to be alone? Is it possible? What would it mean to be genuinely by oneself? Susan Rosenberg raised her hand, no doubt ready to treat us to a description of Zen meditation and its capacity to melt the ego beyond solitude into pure nothingness. But Meyers must have seen something ripple across Carla Masse's beautiful face. He gestured in her direction, though she hadn't volunteered.

Carla was a high-school princess, a sorority girl, whose autobiography, I'd have guessed, would have translated into a graph peaking from prom to prom, with soft valleys of preparation in between. She spoke in a teasing nasal voice acquired from Karen Laidlaw (vitally alive in my memory for having given a thirty-minute talk on the subject of the pencil in the English class of Miss McDougle—she of the stolen rank book and the supply-closet imprisonment; she whose glasses Mark Castle snatched from off her desk and wore through most of a fifty-minute class period). What Carla did was to run through a litany of defenses against being alone. She mentioned listening to the radio and talking on the phone, then playing the songs and conversations over in her mind, and a myriad of other strategies, ending, perceptively enough, with expectation, our habit of blocking out the present by waiting for things to happen in the future. But Carla did not express herself with detachment. She said "I." "This is how I keep from being alone." "And why," asked Meyers, "is it hard to be alone?" "Because," Carla answered, "I might start to think about things."

MEDFORD HIGH, WHATEVER ITS APPEARANCES, WAS NOT A SCHOOL. IT WAS A PLACE WHERE YOU LEARNED TO DO—OR WERE PUNISHED FOR FAILING IN—A VARIETY OF EXERCISES.

Carla had been, up until that point, one of the Elect, predestined for all happiness; suddenly she had gone over to the terminally Lost. One of the great sources of grief for those who suffer inwardly is their belief that others exist who are perpetually and truly happy. From the ranks of the local happy few, Carla had just checked out, leaving some effective hints about those she'd left behind.

The book that mattered to me wasn't *The Stranger,* which had gotten Carla going, or Freud's book on the herd instinct (when I was writing my dissertation, a literary critical reading of Freud,

ALL IMAGES ARE FROM MEDFORD HIGH SCHOOL'S 1970 YEARBOOK. PHOTOGRAPHED BY TIFFANY WHITE

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my working text of *Group Psychology* was, somehow, the one that had belonged to Gubby Shea, with the *o*'s colored in to about page 20), but Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.* It's a hard book for me to read now, with its pumped-up, cartoon hero, Randall Patrick McMurphy. But at the time it was all in all. I read it in a lather, running through it in about ten hours straight, then starting in again almost immediately.

But that didn't happen right off. It was probably on the fifth day of reading the book out loud in class that a chance remark Meyers made caught my attention, or what there was of it then to catch. He said that prisons, hospitals, and schools were on a continuum, controlling institutions with many of the same protocols and objectives, and that Kesey, with his bitter portrait of the mental hospital, might be seen as commenting on all these places.

This idea, elementary as it was, smacked me with the force of revelation. Here was a writer who was not on the side of the teachers, who in fact detested them and their whole virtuous apparatus. That the book was in part crude and ugly I knew even at the time: Blacks in it are twisted sadists, the women castrators or sweet whores. But it was the anti-authoritarian part that swept me in; here was someone who found words, gorgeous, graffiti-sized, and apocalyptic, for what in me had been mere inchoate impulses, dumb groans of the spirit laboring away in its own darkness.

"YOU CAN'T like that book anymore," said a well-meaning, department-broken professor of English I ran into after giving a lecture in California. "You used to be able to like it, but not anymore" he said, not smugly, not knowingly, but a little wistfully. I understood what he meant, but I couldn't share the genteel sentiment. That book pulled me out of where I was. So it wasn't angelic: If you'll only consent to being saved by an angel, you may have some time to wait.

During the period when we were reading Kesey aloud and discussing him, Doug Meyers started bringing things into class. Every Friday we got some music: I remember hearing Billie Holiday, Mozart, the Incredible String Band, the Velvet Underground.The selection standard was simple—things he liked that we probably would not have heard. He also showed us art books, read a poem from time to time, and brought in friends of his to explain themselves. Meyers loved the things he offered us, but he loved them in a quirky way: He seemed to look affectionately askance at everything he cared about. What love you could find in Medford culture, where you could find it, wasn't always so easy to distinguish from the mechanisms of hunger and satiety.

A panel of Students for a Democratic Society members appeared one day to debate the Vietnam War with us. (Most of us were in favor.) One February day, a group of black students burst into the room during class and announced that this was the anniversary of Malcolm X's death. Meyers looked up mildly from his place in the circle and asked the foremost of them, "And when was he born, Malcolm Little?" The young man knew, or said he did, and gave a date. Meyers nodded and invited them to sit down and talk about politics. It was the first time I'd had an extended conversation about these things with blacks, and more than a few followed. These discussions didn't stop the ongoing racial guerrilla war at Medford High, but they were something.

AS TIME WENT on, word spread around the school that odd things were happening in Meyers's classroom. It was known that once, on a torpid winter day, he brought us all outside for a snowball fight. Joseph—no surprise—got it going by heaving a jagged ice chunk, caveman-style, at Meyers. Meyers, who looked that day like a Mexican padre, with his long black coat and broadbrimmed black hat, responded by trying to pitch Joseph into a snowbank. Meyers was ill–coordinated but determined. From where I stood, it looked like Joseph was being attacked by a giant crow. When Joseph shook the snow off his parka and stepped up for retaliation, a bunch of us pelted him with snowballs.

As the weather warmed up, the class occasionally went outside to sit on the grass and hold discussions there. This sometimes resulted in one or two of us nodding off, but Meyers didn't much care; he had most of us most of the time now. He sat cross-legged, wise-medicine-man-style, and swung his wrist and laughed, and we answered the questions he asked, because what he thought mattered perhaps did. It was a first, this outdoors business; no one at Medford High would have imagined doing it.

One Thursday afternoon, just as we were wrapping up a discussion of Thoreau, Meyers gave us a solemn, mischievous look, the sort of expression shrewd old rabbis are supposed to be expert in delivering, and said, "There's been some doubt expressed about our going outside." Then he told a story. In the faculty cafeteria, with plenty of the other teachers milling around, Meyers had been approached by Dandy Dan O'Mara, the sub-master, the disciplinarian. O'Mara had the sly bullying style of a hard Irish cop. He had a barroom face, red nose, watery eyes, the hands of someone who worked for a living. He was stepping up to put Meyers in his place.

O'Mara got rapidly to the point. What would happen, he'd asked Meyers, if everyone held class outside? Now this was familiar stuff to us all. O'Mara's question came out of that grand conceptual bag that also contained lines like "Did you bring gum for everyone?" and "Would you like to share that note with the whole class?" O'Mara was trying to treat Meyers like a student, like one of us, and in front of his colleagues. At Medford High, there were two tribes, us and them. Meyers had defied the authorities; clearly he had become one of them, a student, of no use or interest whatever. But in fact, Meyers was of no particular clan but his own, the tribe of rootless, free-speculating readers and talkers and writers who owe allegiance first to a pile of books that they've loved, and then, only secondly, to other things.

O'Mara did not know this. Nor did he know that Meyers, however diminutive, mild, and Mandarinly self-effacing, thought himself something of a big deal. So O'Mara would not have been prepared when Meyers drew an easy breath and did what every high-school kid would like to do when confronted with this sort of bullying. He didn't fight it, didn't stand on his dignity. He simply ran with it. What if everyone held class outside on sunny days? Suppose that happened? And from there, Meyers went on to draw a picture of life at Medford High School—a picture that had people outside on the vast lawn talking away about books and ideas and one thing and another, hanging out, being lazy and being absorbed, thinking hard from time to time, and reveling in the spring. It was Woodstock and Socrates

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agora fused, and Meyers spun it out for us, just as he had for O'Mara. What if that happened, he asked us (and the submaster)? How tragic would it be?

This vision of the renovated school took a long time to unfold, and it had something like a musical form, ebbing and rising, threading back through major themes and secondary motifs. And in my mind's eye, I could see O'Mara wilting, growing too small for his wrinkled, sad clothes. He would soon know, as we did, that Meyers could produce plenty more of this (he was the most eloquent man I'd met) and that it was time to cut and run. What struck me about the performance (and I believed Meyers's rendition of it, word for word—he was unfailingly, often unflatteringly honest) was that it was done with words alone, nothing equivalent to the body blows Kesey's R.P. McMurphy specializes in.

We went outside whenever we chose to after that. It was very odd: I had been at Medford High for three years, and I had never seen O'Mara's side lose a round. I'd seen a kid from the city's preeminent street gang, the South Medford Bears, spit in a teacher's face; but soon enough the police wagon was there and the big boy was trussed and bawling and on the way to jail. After class was over on the day that Meyers told us the O'Mara story, John Aquino, the quarterback of the football team and very little in line with the stereotype, said to me, "You know, Meyers can really be an asshole when he wants to be." In Medford, there were fifty intonations you could apply to the word "asshole." Spun right, the word constituted high praise.

O'Mara was a broad target. America was in crisis then; people were assuming intense allegorical identities: pig, peacenik, hawk, dove. O'Mara had turned into an ugly monolith, at least in our eyes. In Asia, the Vietcong were making fools of his spiritual brethren, Johnson, Westmoreland, McNamara, and the rest. His sort was on the run. In the next few years, it would get even worse for them. But Meyers, for his part, hadn't treated O'Mara as among the lost, even though he probably had it coming. Instead he'd invited him to a party, an outdoor extravaganza. At the time, O'Mara surely couldn't discern the invitation in Meyers's extended aria, but who knows what he might have seen later on as he turned it all over in his mind.

THAT YEAR of teaching was the last for Doug Meyers. He got married, went to law school, and, I heard, eventually moved to Maine, where he could pursue a life a little akin to the one Thoreau, his longtime idol, managed to lead during his stay at Walden. I haven't seen Meyers in about twenty-five years. But I do carry around with me the strong sense that the party he invited us to, me and Carla and Gubby and Michael de Leo and Dandy Dan O'Mara (but not Joseph, no, not everyone quite), is still a live possibility. Sometimes I even stumble on an installment of it, or help make one.

ALL GOOD TEACHING ENTAILS SOME KIDNAPPING; THERE'S A DEGREE OF MALICE INVOLVED.

I had great teachers after Doug Meyers, some of the world's most famous in fact, but I never met his equal. What I liked most about him, I suppose, was that for all the minor miracle of what he accomplished with us, he was no missionary: He served us but also himself. He got what he wanted out of Medford High, which was a chance to affront his spiritual enemies, though with some generosity, and to make younger people care about the sorts of things he cared about, to pull them out of their parents' orbit and into his. All good teaching entails some kidnapping; there's a touch of malice involved.

As well as some sorrow: Good teachers have many motivations, but I suspect that loneliness is often one of them. You need a small group, a coterie, to talk to; unable to find it in the larger world, you try to create it in the smaller sphere of a classroom. Meyers, who seemed at times a little lost in his life, a brilliant orphan, did something like that with us. (When he saw the material he had to work with on that first day, he must have been on the verge of stepping out the window.) Whatever his motives, part of what I admired about him was his streak of arrogance. His goodness had some edge to it.

It would be a mistake to believe that what Meyers taught about teaching was that always and until the end of time you should draw the chairs into a circle, read pop-cult marvels like *Cuckoo's Nest,* and apply them directly to the situation at hand. No, Meyers taught something else entirely. When I call him to mind in that long black padre coat, he reminds me of Groucho Marx in *Horse Feathers,* duckwalking at top throttle back and forth in front of a whole congress of professors, singing out his Marxian ditty with the gorgeous refrain "Whatever it is, I'm against it!"

WHAT MEYERS taught—or at least what I gleaned from him—is that anything that's been successfully institutionalized, however rebellious it may seem or however virtuous, is stifling. What's called subversion only lasts for an instant in a school or a hospital or a home; it's quickly swept up to become part of the protocol, an element in "the way we do things around here." At the time, Kesey and Camus collided well enough with the dead protocols of Medford High, but now, for all I know, they fit in fine—alienation has become standard issue. What to do then? When Bacchus is ascendant,

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when all the world is a pop-cult blast, as it can seem now, then maybe you become a high priest of Apollo, with his hard graces. Teachers, freelance spirit healers that they are or ought to be, make a diagnosis, pour out a cure or two, then see what happens. Or so Meyers did with us.

Such teaching incites friction. Many students, the successes in particular, resent it and respond with civil venom. And teachers, under-compensated as they usually are, often yearn for some adulation to balance the books. It's tough to be both broke and unloved.

"Whenever others agree with me," the sublime Oscar Wilde said, "I know that I must be wrong." When students love you from Day One, when you succeed too fast, chances are that Wilde's dictum applies. And when the world does eventually come around to your way of thinking, maybe then it's time to deliver your premises a salutary whack: "Whatever it is," chants Groucho from the wings, "I'm against it."

This approach isn't without its costs. One pays for the kind of mental exhilaration that Meyers initiated. One pays in self-doubt and isolation, in the suspicion that what seems to be true resistance is merely a perverse substitute for genuine talent, a cheap way of having something to say. Meyers's path, so appealing in its first steps, separated me from my family, cut me loose from religion and popular faith, sent me adrift beyond the world bordered by TV and piety and common sense. One step down that road followed another, and now, at forty-six, I probably could not turn around if I wished to.

Still, the image I most often hit on when I think about Meyers glows brightly enough. It's late spring, a gloomy dead day. He's brought in a record by the Incredible String Band. He's at the back of the room standing beside the beat-up phonograph. I dislike the record and open my book, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which has not been assigned in any class, and disappear into it. Meyers cranks the music just a little louder. I keep reading. But then, curious, I raise my head. The racket of the String Band floods in. And there in the back of the room, Meyers is dancing away. He's a terrible dancer, stiff and arrhythmic. Not until I saw Bob Dylan in concert did I ever see anyone dance so self-consciously. It struck me that this was probably the first time anyone had ever danced in this building, or at least in this classroom. The air was too heavy with invisible gray weight: Most bodies, given instructions, probably couldn't have responded.

But here was Meyers, bringing it off. It was like a few good new words coming into the language, some strokes of light rendered by a painter for the first time, though with an unsteady enough hand. Sometime in the future, maybe, they'd have everyone at Medford High School up and dancing to the Incredible String Band in geometric unison or in spontaneous disarray. They'd teach mini-courses in the band's kind of music, whatever that might be. But not then, and not for a little while to come, either. Meyers had scored a benevolent victory over the place. (You could say he'd beaten them at their game, but really he'd shown them a new one.) He had a right to a little celebration.

Mark Edmundson teaches English at the University of Virginia. He is the author most recently of *Nightmare on Main Street* (Harvard). He is writing a book on education and humanism.

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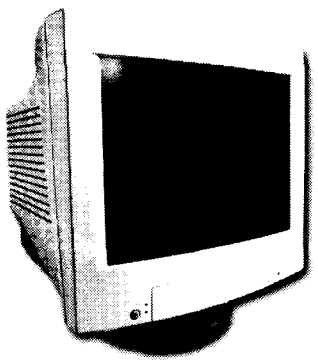

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continued from page 7

religions to "cut [us] checks"—a defamatory phrase implying that we were on the payroll of groups we were writing about.

Oddly enough, Benjamin Zablocki admits in his *Nova Religio* article that the Unification Church paid his way to one conference as well. Why is Zablocki portrayed as a hero while others, such as myself, are defined throughout Allen's article as "cult-friendly," a term obviously intended to denigrate both our scholarship and the groups we study?

There are numerous errors in Allen's article. I told her that I attended a meeting, which I did not myself call, between a well-known psychologist of religion and an executive of the American Psychological Association (APA). At this meeting, we discussed the need for some response to misleading testimony on behalf of "brainwashing." As a result of the discussion, the APA filed a brief in the appeal of a case to the California Supreme Court. Allen knew that Dick Anthony, and not I, was the intellectual driving force behind the amicus brief. Anthony, whose scholarly work in this area is without peer, is not even mentioned in Allen's article. Moreover, I told Allen that when Zablocki entered the discussion about whether the APA should withdraw from the brief, I wrote him a lengthy letter in an attempt to discuss the issues the brief raised. Zablocki never responded.

Allen also knew about the massive campaign launched by Margaret Singer and some friends to force the APA to withdraw its sponsorship from the amicus brief. The campaign included threats to sue the APA and also to lead clinicians, who make up some 60 percent of APA members, out of the APA if it did not withdraw from the brief. The six-to-four vote to withdraw was more a recognition of Singer's threats than a judgment on the brief's merits.

Furthermore, Allen knew that I helped write the statement eventually adopted by the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion—the one that Allen claims adopted a "more noncommittal stance" on the issue of brainwashing. That statement made it clear that the brainwashing hypothesis was unproven. Allen's account of this episode seems a deliberate mischaracterization of what happened.

Allen implied that the lawsuits by Singer and Ofshe against the APA, and the American Sociological Association, and several scholars were dismissed quickly on technicalities. She failed to say anything about the fact that both lawsuits were for more than $30 million in damages, that each suit took more than a year to resolve, and that the individual scholars named were forced to find their own attorneys. Those lawsuits were very troublesome for those of us sued, and if they had been successful, no scholar would be safe in commenting in a critical way on another scholar's work. Allen might have developed that perspective in her story, but such concerns did not fit her story line.

JAMES T. RICHARDSON
PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY
AND JUDICIAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

Charlotte Allen rendered a useful service to academic integrity by pointing out that the best and the brightest sociologists of religion who study new religious movements (NRMs) have become partisan propagandists. Eminent scholars have stooped to cheerleading for any and every group calling itself an NRM. The vast majority of researchers follow their subjects' eminent leaders, and only a handful of critics dare to express dissent. Scholars routinely take money from NRMs, and then defend them in made-to-order publications. More pressing than the brainwashing debate is the very real question of how researchers have been converted into apologists: What is it about sociologists of religion that makes them such eager collaborationists? Explaining this phenomenon of group conversion is the real challenge now facing academic research on NRMs.

BENJAMIN BEIT-HALLAHMI
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA

Charlotte Allen's story raised many important issues. But *Lingua Franca* went too far in lumping together all of the scholars who have accepted fees from religious cults as "cult-sponsored experts." There are many gradations between accepting an occasional fee from a cult and being a totally dependent hireling on the cult's payroll. Charlotte Allen, to her credit, was careful to make such distinctions in her article. But whoever wrote the blurb for your table of contents obscured these distinctions and may have unfairly damaged some reputations. Although there may be some academics who are so completely dependent on the fees they receive from religious cults that they warrant the epithet "cult-sponsored experts," none of those mentioned in the article fit that description to the best of my knowledge.

BENJAMIN ZABLOCKI
PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Charlotte Allen's article emanated at least a slight whiff of McCarthyism. The most outrageous statement occurs not actually in the article but on the table of contents, in which the blurb for the piece uses the term "cult-sponsored experts." The implication is that highly eminent scholars such as David Bromley, Jeffrey Hadden, James Richardson, and Rodney Stark are wholly owned subsidiaries of the Unification Church or Scientology who probably could not fund or publish their research, or gain tenure or promotion, without the assistance of their cult "sponsors." Is this what *Lingua Franca* really meant to imply?

In her piece, Allen prefers the designation "cult-friendly scholars," which implies that certain people are all-purpose sympathizers or defenders of "cults." Yet in 1985, Bromley published a penetrating analysis of the financial practices of the Unification Church, which the church did not appreciate. When I taught at Queens College in the 1970s, I began to criticize the application of brainwashing theories to groups such as the Unification Church and to denounce physically coercive deprogramming. But at the same time, I had arguments with the campus Moonie leader in which I attacked the church's extreme right-wing politics and its deplorable tendency to view the most brutal dictators as being on the side of God because they were anticommunist.

Ultimately, the application of terms such as "cult-sponsored" and "cult-friendly" to scholars who have testified in court on behalf of a movement, or attended a conference organized by a movement, bears some resemblance to the widespread use of terms such as "communist sympathizer" in the 1950s to stigmatize opponents of anticommunist programs. The same absolutism underlies both vocabularies. If it is assumed that certain groups are totally evil and are, moreover, blameworthy with regard to all conflicts in which they may be

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enmeshed, then any support for them expressed by reputable nonmembers or any fraternization with them must necessarily be viewed as dubious. This hermeneutic of suspicion may be unwarranted, however, if controversial "cults" are viewed as flawed groups with some objectionable elements but not as embodiments of absolute evil.

THOMAS ROBBINS
ROCHESTER, MN

Charlotte Allen replies: Significantly, James Richardson does not deny that he has served as a paid court consultant for cults in addition to studying them academically. As for the "numerous errors" he says my article contains, he fails to specify any. I duly reported that he attended a meeting of "other social scientists and a Moonie lawyer to develop a strategy for defeating the Ofshe-Singer brainwashing theory" in the Molko-Leal lawsuit against the Unification Church. I never said that Richardson was the "intellectual driving force" behind the APA's amicus curiae brief in that case.

As for the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, I merely stated that it had initially endorsed the ASA's brief but later voted to take a "more noncommittal stance" on brainwashing—an assertion that Richardson does not dispute. Finally, I neither stated nor implied that the Ofshe-Singer lawsuits against Richardson and others were dismissed "on technicalities." Rather, I made it clear that the suits were dismissed on substantive grounds: that federal racketeering laws do not extend to disputes over the merits of scholarly theories, and that the First Amendment protects debates over professional and academic matters.

As for the other letters, as several of their writers note, I did not use the phrase "cult-sponsored experts" in my article. That phrase appeared only in the table of contents, written by *Lingua Franca*'s editors, not me.

SET IN STONE

Michael Wise's wonderful article ("Totem and Taboo," December/January) suggested that Berliners have resisted completing a Holocaust memorial due to an aversion to public admissions of guilt. That may be so, but I can certainly see differences between a monument like Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial and the one proposed by Eisenman and Serra.

Lin's sculpture is a comprehensive expression of the sorrow this nation endured during a lengthy and futile war. It mourns the collective loss of our national honor as well as the personal grief of individuals who lost relatives and friends in Vietnam. Richard Serra's sculpture, on the other hand, does not express grief for the loss of both Jewish and German humanity under Hitler; rather, it captures the oppressive authoritarianism of the Nazi philosophy that led to the Holocaust. Berliners and all Germans need to grieve, both for the Jews and for themselves. A memorial that allows that to happen has yet to be designed.

CAROL NOVAK,
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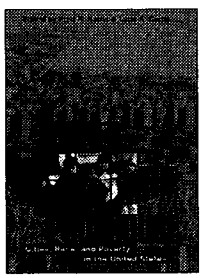

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Indiana University Bloomington Libraries Announces 1999–2000 Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship in African or Slavic Studies Research Librarianship

Purpose and Description
Indiana University Bloomington Libraries is pleased to announce an academic-year postdoctoral fellowship program for the training of an African studies or Slavic studies research librarian. The program is supported by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and offers one nine-month fellowship (non-renewable) to a recent Ph.D. in any field specializing in either African or Slavic studies, who wishes to pursue a career as an African or Slavic library specialist. The program is affiliated with Indiana University's Library along with its African Studies Program and its Russian and East European Institute, both of which serve as U.S. Department of Education, Title VI National Resource Centers.

Under the guidance of experienced librarians on the Bloomington campus, the fellow will participate in an apprenticeship, gaining knowledge of collection development and public services work. In addition to developing a familiarity with the internal operations of a research library, the fellow will develop skills related to the selection of library resources and the provision of reference services. The fellow may also participate in selected activities of the academic program in African or Slavic studies; audit one or two courses at the School of Library and Information Science; visit libraries with significant collections in either African or Slavic studies; or prepare a paper for possible presentation at the annual meeting of the relevant area studies association.

One fellow will be selected in 1999–2000 in either African or Slavic studies, contingent on the strength of the applicant pool. A similar fellowship program is anticipated to fund one fellow in the alternate field in 2000–01.

Qualifications
A recent Ph.D. in a field specializing in either African or Slavic studies is required, along with working knowledge of one of the vernacular languages. Demonstrated ability to work effectively with the wider academic community and strong written and oral communication skills. Evidence of interdisciplinary course work is desirable as well as prior experience working in a research library or knowledge of scholarly publishing and the book trade.

Preference will be given to those candidates who, either in graduate school or in subsequent employment have developed a clear affinity for this alternative career path.

Salary and Benefits
The fellowship for 1999 is $26,500 (nine months). Indiana University offers a benefits package that includes medical and life insurance, a retirement plan, sick leave, and nine holidays annually.

Candidates should submit a letter describing their training, experience, and interest, along with a resume and the names of three references to Lila Fredenburg, Indiana University, Library Human Resources Office, 1320 East Tenth Street, Rm C-201, Bloomington, Indiana 47405-1801. Review of applications will begin **March 15, 1999**. The beginning date for the fellowship is flexible, but anticipated to be around September 1, 1999. Final candidates will be invited to interview on the Bloomington campus in the spring.

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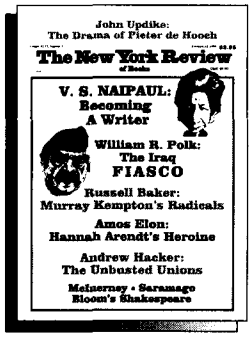

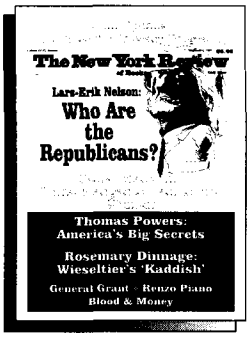

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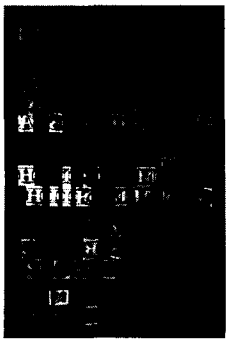

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The American Association of University Professors, American Council of Learned Societies, Association of American University Presses, Association of Research Libraries, and Coalition for Networked Information are sponsoring a conference, "New Challenges for Scholarly Communication in the Digital Era: Changing Roles and Expectations in the Academic Community." The individual communities within the academy face seemingly unique challenges in the digital era that are in fact interconnected in the broad system of scholarly communication. This conference will explore the nature and scope of the challenges and seek to define new roles that build on the strengths and needs of all. Topics include: Getting Ahead in the Digital World; Distance Education; What Does It Mean to Publish?; Economics of Scholarly Communication; Preservation and Access. Program details and registration information can be found on the Web at www.arl.org/scomm/ conf.html. For more information contact: Mary M. Case, Association of Research Libraries, 21 Dupont Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20036 T: (202) 296-2296, F: (202) 872-0884; email: <marycase@arl.org>

Washington, DC: March 26–27, 1999

RACE IN AMERICA

"[illegible] America: A National Conference" convenes against the backdrop of a complex period of transition [illegible] and globally. This includes rapid population growth among people of color in the U.S., the simultaneous [illegible] of impoverishment and concentrated wealth, and global economic restructuring. These trends are marked by [illegible] efforts to reverse or extend the gains resulting from the Civil Rights Movement, and by increasing debates about the [illegible] of the concept of "race" as a descriptive, analytic, and prescriptive tool. Convening at Michigan State University, this conference examines existing systems of power and privilege in the U.S., especially as these impact communities of color. Academicians, public officials, community activists, and citizens representing racial, ethnic, and ideological diversity will meet to identify specific goals and strategies that promote democratic social, political, and economic [illegible]. Keynote and Roundtable speakers include: Molefi Asante, Temple; Mary Frances Berry, University of Pennsylvania; Richard Delgado and Evelyn Hu-DeHart, UC-Boulder; Nathan Glazer and William Julius Wilson, Harvard; Shelby Steele, Marable, Columbia; Dinesh D'Souza, American Enterprise Institute; Abigail Thernstrom, Manhattan Institute. Attendees must pre-register by mail. Registration information and forms available on the Web at [illegible]/raceconf. For additional questions T: (517) 353-6750; email: <raceconf@jsri.msu.edu>

East Lansing, MI: April 7–10, 1999

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JEWS OF ITALY

[illegible] sponsor a three-day international conference "The Most Ancient of Minorities: [illegible] of Italy From Antiquity to the Twentieth Century." Highlights include scholars [illegible], Scotland, and the United States; musical performances; a screening of Roberto [illegible] special panel devoted to the life, work and influence of Primo Levi; testimony from [illegible] videotaped testimony from the "Survivor's of the Shoah Visual History [illegible] during Italian Jewish cuisine. The Keynote address will be given by Alexander Stille, [illegible] author of "Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism." [illegible] Gunzberg (Brown University), Michele Luzzati (University of Pisa), Paolo [illegible] Study, Princeton), For registration information, contact the Hofstra Cultural [illegible] <hofculctr@hofstra.edu>; for all other inquiries contact Professor Stanislao G. [illegible] Eleger Hall, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY 11549, T (516) 463-5611;

Hempstead, NY: April 14–16, 1999

CONTESTED CITIZENSHIP

The Interdisciplinary Group on French Culture and Society, Northwestern University, announces a Franco-American conference on "Contested Citizenship/La Citoyenneté en Question." Keynote speakers are Michel Wieviorka, on citizenship and identities in Western democracies and Houston Baker, on documenting community/documenting citizenship. Panels on "The Juridical and the Political," with Françoise Gaillard and Chantal Mouffe; on "Citizenship, Immigration, Diasporas," with Patrick Weil, Alec Hargreaves, and Ali Behdad; on "Citizenship and Gender," with Janine Mossuz-Lavau and Christopher Castiglia; and on "Supranationality and Globalization," with Catherine Wihtol de Wenden and Bruce Cumings. Conference organizers: Michal Ginsburg, Michael Loriaux, and Mireille Rosello, Northwestern University, and Françoise Gaillard, Université de Paris-VII. Co-sponsored by the French Ministry of Culture and Northwestern University. For full program information consult the conference Web site at www.citizenship.nwu.edu.

Evanston, IL: April 22–23, 1999

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Hypotheses

TALKING HEADS

Speaking out of both sides of your brain

HOW MANY OF US, IN ATTEMPTing to master a second language as adults, have had an experience distressingly similar to that of Professor Timofey Pnin? Within a year of his arrival in the United States from Russia (by way of France), Pnin has become proficient enough in English to drop expressions like "wishful thinking" and "okey-dokey" into his conversation. In another year or so, he can handle practically any topic in his new language and even interrupt his narration with phrases like "to make a long story short." Thereafter, all progress ceases. A decade later, despite continual efforts at improvement, his English is still wonky and rife with flaws.

Pnin, admittedly, is a fictitious character. His creator, Vladimir Nabokov, was vastly more gifted linguistically; witness literary achievements in English like *Lolita, Pale Fire,* and, indeed, *Pnin*. Yet even Nabokov complained that his adoptive tongue never amounted to much more than "a second-rate brand of English," a hothouse creation devoid of the natural turns and ordinary associations that are every native speaker's birthright.

Nabokov's linguistic frustrations were a loftier version of those endured by his creature Pnin, not to mention expatriates, émigrés, and foreign correspondents everywhere. However determined their study of an adoptive language, however thorough their immersion in it, they eventually reach a plateau. At a dinner party conducted in the nonnative tongue, for instance, they may contribute to the table talk, but the best they can aspire to be is a bore. In such situations, as Evelyn Waugh observed, "there is no platitude so trite that a highly educated foreigner will not bring it out with pride."

The problem is simple: These latecomers to bilingualism have learned the new language on the wrong side of the brain.

The human brain, of course, has two hemispheres, which specialize in different things. It has long been known that the left hemisphere is overwhelmingly dominant for language. In the 1860s, the French neurologist Paul Broca studied patients suffering from various forms of aphasia (loss of language) as a result of brain injuries; in every case, these injuries were to the left side of the brain. His research, and that of the German brain scientist Carl Wernicke in the 1870s, led to the discovery of two spots on the left half of the cerebral cortex that are specifically devoted to language. Broca's area is responsible for speech production; Wernicke's area is involved in language comprehension and syntax.

Thanks to contemporary brain-scanning techniques, we now know that many other patches of the cerebral cortex also contribute to linguistic functioning, each storing bits and pieces of language like so many filing cabinets. Overall, the left hemisphere is dominant for some 90 percent of monolinguals. This raises an obvious question: Is the same true for bilinguals? Or might it be the case that one side of the brain is dominant for language A, and the other for language B?

The answer has been furnished in the last decade or so by experiments in which different spots on the cerebral cortex have been directly stimulated by electronic probes. (Such research, useful in treating epilepsy, has been pioneered by University of Washington neurosurgeon George Ojemann.) In balanced bilinguals—those who speak two languages with comparable fluency—the left hemisphere tends to be dominant for both languages. Within that hemisphere, however, the spots responsible for language A are largely distinct from those responsible for language B. And if language A was learned first, its spots tend to be smaller—the neurons, it seems, are more tightly wired. The language learned second has to grab whatever available neurons might be left over, so its networks are larger and more diffuse.

The most balanced bilinguals are nearly always those lucky enough to acquire both their languages as children. So what happens to those who struggle to pick up a second language *after* puberty? Unfortunately, it goes into the right half of your brain and, if you are like Pnin, stays there. Recent research shows that high-school-age students learning a new language initially do most of the processing of it in their right hemispheres; only after four years or so of immersion does the processing shift to the left hemisphere for some of them.

Curiously, movement can sometimes occur in the opposite direction. Fabio Franco at the University of Trieste has studied a young woman named Carla, who had been fluent in her native Italian and in English from childhood; both languages, brain scans showed, were processed mainly in her left hemisphere. When Carla began training as a simultaneous translator, however, the English began to move over to tiny areas in the right side of her brain that are not usually associated with language—presumably because more of the left side was needed for the translation work.

Since the 1960s, it has been part of the popular lore that the left brain is cold, rational, and analytic, while the right brain is intuitive, impulsive, and holistic. Silly as such dichotomies might be, it does seem likely that the left hemisphere is the more expert and automatic when it comes to language—a probability that imbalanced bilinguals, condemned to talk out of the right side of their brain, can only rue. We can't all be like George Steiner, who claims to experience English, French, and German as "perfectly equivalent centers of myself." Nor can we hope to emulate the great linguist and polyglot Roman Jakobson who, owing to his heavy accent, was reputed to speak seven languages, all of them Russian.

JIM HOLT

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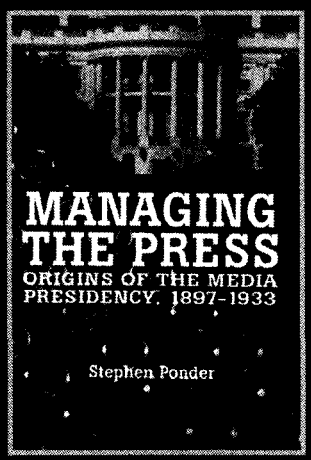

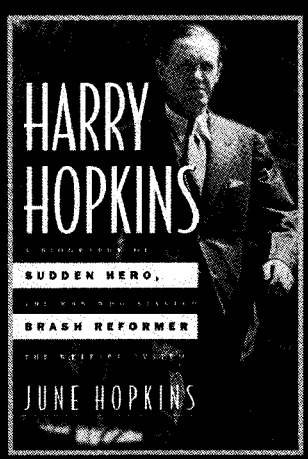

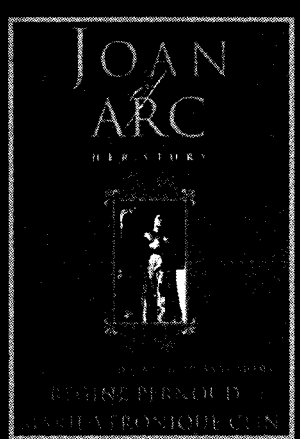

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